Joy of Parenting

A Guide Book for the Early Childhood Years

Dear Parents,

Children learn while they play. Playing and learning are not separate activities, but are interconnected. This manual is the result of our effort to excite parents about how they can help their children meet their potential and value how children learn through play. This manual deals with all the aspects of child development – physical (including health and nutrition), cognitive development, language and communication, making convivial relationships with adults, other children and also the environment and nurturing children's intangible, but vital sense of self.

Playing and experimenting with things and activities, trying out variations, making 'mistakes', talking about them, sharing ideas and things – all these lead to a knowledge about the world, understanding concepts and mastering skills. These are best achieved when children are happy and enjoy whatever they are doing.

During the process, children need guidance and support with love and understanding. Every child needs parenting and the joy that is derived from sensible parenting, by both child and adult, is immeasurable. This Guide Book together with the Learning Through Play Calendars deals with many of your concerns regarding child rearing, and sets your mind at rest, especially when you compare your child to a sibling or some other child.

You have to remember that there is no cut-off point for every stage; one flows into the other smoothly. There are as many variations as there are norms. Up to 3 years, the stages are clubbed together in sets of months. There will be individual variations within the norms.

The ages are divided into 14 stages, between birth to 6 years and each stage has 3 pages with interesting and useful information. However, the content in the 4th page does not necessarily correspond to the particular age group only.

This Guide Book deals with some of the practical aspects of child rearing.

HAPPY PARENTING!

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For CLC - CPHE Section (gratis from Ms Maya Gaikwad)
Jw
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I. PARENTING

IT IS NEVER TOO LATE FOR PARENTING A CHILD

SO START NOW!!

What is parenting?

The term 'Parenting' indicates the nurture of young children. It includes the areas of rearing, protection, nutrition, health, hygiene and stimulation for optimum development. Most important of all is the emotional and social development through warm interactions.

There are some aspects of parenting that SHOULD be followed by all those in a parenting role:

- Harmony and happiness in the child's environment
- Openness and honesty
- Integrity and trustworthiness
- Consistency in interactions
- Respect and consideration for children
- Unconditional love and concern
- Time and patience

Who is involved in parenting?

All the adults in the child's environment, such as mother, father, grandparents, siblings, other relatives, paid caregivers, doctors, casual visitors and teachers are in a parenting role at some time or the other in a child's life. An easy definition to remember is

Pappa Amma Relatives Elders Neighbours Teachers Society. **(PARENTS)**

When does parenting start?

Parenting starts with the discovery of conception by the parents and the family. It starts with the care of the pregnant mother and care of the baby in the womb. Therefore, planned parenthood, safe pregnancy and care of the newborn are also important aspects of parenting.

II. UNDERSTANDING HOLISTIC CHILD DEVELOPMENT

A. THE MIRACLE OF THE BRAIN:

The development of the brain in the first 3 years is most critical. The experiences in early childhood set the stage for *the way people think and learn for the rest of their lives and enhances their learning capacity, coping skills and competencies.* However, understanding brain development is fascinating and tells us that, along with good nutrition and health, good nurturing, age-appropriate stimulation and interaction in early life are vital.

UNDERSTANDING BRAIN DEVELOPMENT

- Brain development starts in the womb. There are billions of cells called 'neurons' in the brain, which are interconnected to form complex patterns.
- A baby is born with about 100 billion brain cells. The brain is already wired with hundreds and thousands of connections (called synapses), mainly to help the baby survive. They are interconnected to form 'neural pathways'.
- The neural pathways supporting communication, cognition, social development and emotional well-being grow very rapidly in the first three years of life.
- What parents do (to stimulate the brain) in the early years have the most important influence on the physical and mental health and the ability to relate to others.
- With every stimulation of the brain, a neural connection takes place, and with every positive reinforcement and stimulation, further networking takes place. This is the way their brain develops and children learn.
- As a baby masters new skills and is exposed to new experiences, new connections are made.

In the absence of stimulation/experiences or if there are negative experiences, the synaptic connections are not maintained and may be discarded. These could be caused by:

- Poor pre-natal care – the mother neglecting her health during pregnancy and being under the influence of abusive substances (smoking, alcohol, drugs), deprives the baby of healthy nutrition essential for the development of the brain.
- Lack of stimulation or negative experiences after birth, during the early stages of development of the child.

- Lack of nutrition due to poverty, improper food habits or gender discrimination.
- Physical and social rejection or discrimination due to birth order of the child, calamity in the family coinciding with the child's birth, disability, skin colour and gender.

There are some important requirements that can be met by parents for ensuring healthy brain development:

1. **Touch** – sends signals of love and comfort even before children have learnt to speak or understand emotions and of course, the opposite would be true as well.
2. **Relationships** – that are loving, caring and consistent help the child feel secure and trusting.
3. **Self-esteem** – children need to feel that their parents love and trust them. This happens when there is complete acceptance of failures and shortcomings and appreciation of success.
4. **Communication** – since babies communicate through crying, smiling and gazing (later babbling) before they talk, touching them and holding them, making eye contact and talking are all ways of demonstrating that they are being responded to, valued and loved.
5. **Playing** – encourages the stimulation of the brain. The importance and purpose of play is to be recognised. Safe, everyday things around the household can be used in an innovative manner for playing.

B. HOW THE CHILD DEVELOPS

Every child is unique in patterns of development, and this should be recognised and respected.

Children develop not only at different rates, but also in different ways - emotionally, intellectually, morally, socially, physically and spiritually and all children have abilities, aptitudes and interests, which can and should be identified and promoted.

Each child develops in a unique manner but there are common stages all children pass through in the same order.

Young children learn from everything that happens to them and around them. They do not separate their learning into different subjects or disciplines. For children, experience is their learning. Play and conversation are the main ways by which young children learn about themselves, other people and the world around them.

Children learn individual tasks in a particular sequence, but they do so at their own rate and there is a normal range at which each skill will be achieved. Some children take longer to achieve their development tasks or may not achieve them in the way we have read or understood, but differently and individually.

Knowing about the specifics of how children develop helps parents:

- Understand that children should achieve the task within their abilities, and not push them beyond the capability of their age level. When parents expect too much, they get angry and assume that the child is misbehaving and not listening. If they become aware of the developmental stages, their expectations and interactions will be appropriate for the child's age.
- Encourage their children to develop to their optimum and enjoy parenting.
- Know what to expect and praise both effort and achievement.
- Become aware of how and when children develop certain skills. This helps them identify difficulties, deficit and delays and then help them with appropriate support.

Understanding the stages of child development

- A child passes through many stages, with each stage, a new skill is learnt.

  The following sequences illustrate this

  - Turning over, sitting, crawling, cruising, walking, running and smiling.
  - Crying, making sounds, babbling, imitating words, saying words, phrases, framing sentences and narrating stories.
  - Learning how to hold a pencil, producing scribbles and then refining them, making pictures, colouring within lines and finally, writing the letters of the alphabet.

Temporary delays occur when children are ill or stressed and parents should know that this is normal. Deficit or disability due to uneven development, or behavioural problems requires a different kind of intervention and stimulation. These children have special needs and it will take them a longer period of time to achieve their potential and may require more parenting effort.

C. DOMAINS OF DEVELOPMENT

Children develop holistically: Physical growth, mental, social, psychological and language development take place simultaneously. All aspects of development are equally important and each is interwoven with the others. All areas of development need to be nurtured at the same time since they are interconnected.

For convenience, the LTPC focuses on Sense of Self, Physical, Relationships, Understanding and Communication **(SPRUC)**, to understand child development and parenting. However, the child should be viewed holistically and helped to develop in a balanced manner.

SENSE OF SELF

- **Sense of Self** is the understanding children have of themselves, their feelings, emotions and their strengths and weaknesses, in short, an understanding of who they are as individuals.
- It begins the moment they are born and continues to grow as they interact with the world
- They feel valued and loved every time:
  - o They are held, spoken to, stimulated, loved and accepted for who they are.
  - o Their basic needs of hunger, warmth and safety are met in a reliable and consistent manner.
  - o Their individual personality, strengths and weaknesses are accepted and respected and this contributes to their perception of how they are regarded and to the growth of their sense of self.
- **Self-confidence** develops when they feel valued and loved. They develop a sense of trust and a feeling of personal security. They acquire self-confidence and understand and accept themselves, accept and respect others.
- **Self-esteem** is a way by which every individual measures his or her worth in relation to the environment. It is the image one has of oneself. Meeting the child's needs with tenderness and affection lays the foundation for strong self-esteem.

Constantly criticising or reproaching a child will lead to low self-esteem that will reflect right through life.

PHYSICAL GROWTH

- This indicates the development of physical skills that help the movement of the body.
  - **Gross motor skills** – that help the movement of the body - the child's ability to walk, run, climb, hop and skip.
  - **Fine motor skills** – that help to manipulate objects - the use of hands and fingers for drawing, feeding, picking up small objects, writing and doing fine actions like cutting, brushing, holding and dressing.
- Parents must understand the expected age range during which the child will attain a certain skill and provide them with activities to aid development.
- Parents and other caregivers must provide nutritious food specific to the age of the child, periods of rest and activity and a safe and interesting home environment for children to develop their full physical potential.

RELATIONSHIPS

- This indicates how they interact with the others in the environment.
- Initially, the relationships revolve around the most significant people in the baby's life –the mother and the father. Later they interact with other caregivers, family members and other children.
- The manner in which these relationships are formed and conducted in early childhood lays the foundation for future relationships and results in building of skills such as relating, sharing and dealing with conflict.
- The foundation for good relationships in life, is the love and understanding they receive in early childhood.

UNDERSTANDING

- This indicates the growth of children's thinking, ability in information processing and understanding about the world, materials and people around them.
- This includes cognitive and intellectual development including understanding concepts, recognition and analytical thinking.

- Children learn through observation, imitation play, exploration, experimentation and problem solving. When given opportunities to do these, it stirs their curiosity, helps them discover how things work, expands their knowledge and sharpens their understanding.
- Children also understand the world through the feelings, tones, gestures and emotions of the people who interact with them.
- All these occur through the process of play and the many everyday activities that offer excellent learning opportunities to children – with the essential support of caregivers.

COMMUNICATION

- The infant starts communicating with the mother at birth and is able to indicate the need for food, sleep or rest through calling for attention with crying and body movements. Speech develops later and is rewarding for the child, as it becomes the main channel for communicating ideas, intentions and feelings.
- It indicates both the ability to use words to express needs, ideas or feelings and the ability to understand what is said and respond appropriately.
- From birth, infants are receptive to the tone of voice. They recognise parents' voices and also distinguish them from that of others.
- Exposing children to communication from birth through talking, singing, reading and telling stories will ensure development of good communication skills.

III. PARENTING IS A SPECIAL PRIVILEGE

The opportunity to be in a parenting role is a special privilege and we should make the best use of it, as it gives us a chance to mould children into good, loving and concerned individuals. Sensitive nurturing and sensible actions will make the task of child rearing a pleasurable experience and produce mature and responsible children. All the adults dealing with children are equally involved in the process. Apart from the biological parents, other members in the family including siblings, people in the community, individuals who serve and fulfil specific needs, doctors and teachers all play a role.

As parents and teachers, all of us need to understand parenting, and recognise the need to enable children to grow and develop to their full potential.

To be effective, the parent or caregiver has to feel competent and have the knowledge to put in the optimal inputs for the holistic development of the child.

In that context, we can apply SPRUC to parents and caregivers too.

Self-esteem:

The caregivers need to feel confident that they are doing the right thing for the children. They should be able to analyse their strengths and skills in parenting.

Only a person with high self-esteem will be able to handle problems with maturity and not feel intimidated or useless, trying to face problems that may arise in child rearing.

For a caregiver to have high self-esteem, he or she should be treated with dignity and respect by the rest of the family. Deprivation and lack of knowledge contribute to low self-esteem. Constant criticism erodes not only self-esteem, but self-confidence as well. Supporting the mother or caregiver in her significant role, in the early years, by the father and other members of the family is equally important.

Physical Health:

A mother's health is very important, as she needs a lot of energy for quick action while rearing the child. Even the part-time caregiver has to be healthy and have the energy to give full attention to the child.

A father's physical and psychological health is equally important.

Hunger makes a parent impatient and short-tempered. Timely, nutritious food should be consumed by the mother, so that she feels energised and can be patient with the baby.

Healthy eating, regular exercise and adequate rest will ensure a calm temper and high energy levels.

Chronic sleep deprivation of the overworked mother are not usually recognised by the family. There has to be a conscious effort to ensure the mother's well-being.

Relationships:
With the arrival of a new baby, the roles and dynamics in the family will change. This has to be recognised and accepted.

New parents should be sensitive to the feelings of all the members in the family and manage their time properly, so that relationships do not suffer because of the time they spend with the new arrival.

When a baby is born, the other children in the family often feel neglected or ignored. Older siblings should be included in childcare activities, but should not be used or exploited to substitute for the mother. They should also be prepared in advance to accept a younger sibling and helped to develop a natural love for the new arrival.

There should be harmony between all members in the family so that children can grow up in a peaceful atmosphere. Parents should never argue in the presence of children.

Children should never be compared to other children who may have better abilities in some skill or activity. There should be no discrimination because of gender, colour or ordinal position in the family. Sometimes children are taunted or over protected because they are small. Any form of discrimination or special treatment is resented by them and the mother. Children with some disability or delay need help but not pity. Family members have to realise that usually the mother feels equally concerned about all her children. If a child is born with some defect or disability, the mother is made to feel responsible for the disability and is blamed for it. Even if she has daughters, the mother is blamed and treated as if it is her fault, when it is not.

THIS HAS TO CHANGE. ALL CHILDREN HAVE TO BE ACCEPTED AND WELCOMED BY THE FAMILY.

Knowledge:

Parents and other caregivers need knowledge about child development, the needs of the child and the concept of holistic development so that they can respond to the social and emotional needs of the child with understanding and support. Mothers and other caregivers should feel free to seek help and information from the older members in the family.

Communication:

Parents, especially mothers, should discuss their problems with elders who have experience. They should learn to express their fears and concerns regarding their child to their spouses and elders.

They should talk to people who care about them and get their own actions validated.

They should be sensitive to the child's efforts at communicating and respond appropriately. Adults should make an effort to listen to children and respect their opinions. Parents should endeavour to recognise the signs that babies use to communicate their needs. With a little sensitivity, messages of different cries can be recognised. Even before children can talk, they communicate effectively through their cries, other sounds and body language. Adults should also encourage older siblings to express their feelings and respond appropriately.

IV. THE LEARNING THROUGH PLAY (LTP) KIT

a) The LTP Calendars

These Calendars provide information regarding child development, suggest activities and explain how these activities will aid development. The illustrations found within the Calenders are an integral aspect of the resource. The pictures connote the meaning of the concepts and bring to life the ideas found in the text. The pictures depict a broad spectrum of the international community we all live in. It illustrates how children develop from birth to 6 years, highlighting milestones and explaining key behaviour and is a valuable tool for parents and caregivers. Each stage is explained in terms of the 5 areas of development: Sense of Self, Physical, Relationships, Understanding and Communication (SPRUC). Each area is given significant importance and the interaction between them, though more apparent in some stages, is important to all and must be stimulated equally to provide optimal child development.

The activities shown in the Calendar are designed to stimulate each area of development. They are simple and in most cases, require simple everyday household materials. When these activities are done, they make a significant impact upon the child's positive development. With the help of what is shown and the messages, parents can create many activities to aid the child's development.

The significance of each activity at a particular stage is that it will help the child to develop the skills necessary for the next stage and for later. For example:

- Drawing helps the child with writing, when older.
- Identifying small differences in puzzles, later helps in the identification of small differences in alphabets and in reading.
- Repeated listening to words helps them in saying them later.
- Learning about shapes and sizes, playing with blocks, sorting and grouping will help later with math.
- Pouring, mixing and building introduces basic concepts of science.
- Imitating all that adults do and how they do it, gives children life skills and values they will imbibe now and demonstrate later in life.

b) The Guide Book to Early Childhood Years

The Guide Book serves as a guide to the LTPC. It tells us not only what children do, but also why, and what we can do that will benefit them the most at each stage. It is self-explanatory and can be used along with the Calendar.

The format is coordinated with the Calendar to make it easy to refer to and understand. For every age or stage, there are 4 pages.

- The 1st page coincides with the corresponding stage in the LTPC, and explains the picture and the important developments taking place.
- The 2nd page explains holistic development (SPRUC), through the questions WHAT (What do children do in this stage), WHY (Why they do it) and HOW (How to ensure/facilitate this)
- The 3rd page of every stage till 2 years, gives additional information regarding Health, Hygiene, Safety (which is essentially the responsibility of the caregiver) and Special Attention to the identification of possible difficulty, delay, deficit or disability.
- The 4th page and a few 3rd pages thereafter, give important messages on parenting concerns, effective parenting practices and vital information on positive child rearing.

V. THE GUIDE TO EARLY CHILDHOOD

i. HEADS-UP STAGE (BIRTH - 2 MONTHS)

At birth, babies are totally dependent on adults for survival and development.

Picture 1

Babies begin to recognise the faces of the people who care for them.

- Parents should look into the face of the baby and talk softly and gently.
- As the baby's head is heavier than the body, it cannot be held up without support.
- The neck and back of the head should always be supported while being carried.
- Looking after children requires time, patience, love and attention.
- Each time parents interact with the child, a strong connection is being formed, and it is a learning experience.

Picture 2

Babies like to look at colourful objects and shapes.

- They can only see up to 30 cm (one foot or arm's length) away.
- Babies are attracted to moving objects and contrast colours like black and white.
- Infants are naturally attracted to the human face and will spend a lot of time examining it.

Picture 3

Gentle massage is soothing. It comforts and relaxes the baby.

- Babies can be gently massaged by placing them on the lap, legs or a table of comfortable height.
- Gentle massage helps in body awareness, the circulation of blood, digestion and breathing.
- Massage also relaxes and calms the baby and enhances emotional bonding.

	SENSE OF SELF	PHYSICAL	RELATIONSHIP	UNDERSTANDING	COMMUNICATION
	"You can't spoil me by holding me close. It helps me to feel secure."	*"I need time to stretch and exercise my arms and legs."*	*"I learn to trust and love when you respond to me quickly."*	*"My eyes try to follow slow movements."*	*"I try to smile and make sounds when I see your face and hear your voice."*
WHAT	Babies bond with their caregiver if they are held close and cuddled. They feel the warmth of the body and hear the soothing heartbeat.	Grasping, sucking, blinking, swallowing, crying are all natural reflexes in babies. They are adjusting to their physical environment and are out of the cramped womb that was their home for nine months.	At this stage, babies cry for all the basic needs such as hunger, wet diaper, sleep or when in pain.	They love to hear a variety of sounds, and see colours, shapes, movements and taste, smell and touch. They are attracted by moving objects and their eyes follow them.	By the age of two months, they develop different cues for different needs. They are attracted to sounds and facial expressions. The smile at 6 weeks, a reflex action, will become a meaningful smile soon.
WHY	Bonding is the basic emotional need at this stage. Being held close and having their basic needs met in a prompt and loving manner, enhance their sense of self. They develop a sense of serenity and trust.	All physical activities help babies grow. As the nervous system matures, the head becomes steadier and they learn to focus on objects.	Every interaction becomes a learning experience. Babies gain confidence and develop a sense of trust when they are responded to quickly and consistently.	Understanding begins at birth and babies are stimulated when an activity interests them. Enriching play experiences enhance the baby's development, laying a strong foundation for life.	Babies can communicate right from birth and their non-verbal communication is the foundation of their later conversation. Babies will express discomfort because of loud noises, strange faces, bright lights, heat or cold or tiredness, through crying.
HOW	When babies cry, they need to be soothed by holding them close cuddling, rocking them and singing to them. Wrapping babies comfortably in a blanket also helps babies feel secure, but their arms and legs should not be bound too tightly. They will not be spoilt by 'cuddling'.	When babies are awake, they should be allowed to move their arms and legs freely. Clothing should be comfortable. Dangling objects at hands' reach will help babies to reach out and kick with their legs. Putting babies on the floor encourages movement of the limbs.	Parents should talk to them and explain their actions during feeding, bathing and other activities. Gently massaging the baby in the first few months of life helps the bonding process.	Parents can use colourful objects, rattles, bells or their own hands to interest the baby.	Parents should train themselves to recognise the different signals for help and respond immediately and appropriately. Songs and words can often be used to calm them. The sounds they hear at this young age will help infants learn words when they are older.

HEALTH AND HYGIENE

Health:

- Babies are vulnerable to exposure to varying temperatures. They should be carefully protected and wrapped and kept warm at all times.
- Babies should be bathed only in lukewarm water. Oil should not be instilled into the eyes or ears or the mouth.

Monitoring:

- Babies' weight increase should be carefully monitored by regular check-ups with the doctor. They should be tested within the first three weeks for vision and hearing.
- Immunisations against childhood illnesses should be done as per doctor's advice.

Hygiene:

- Till the umbilical cord falls off, care should be taken to keep it dry and clean to prevent infections.
- The feeding bottle and nipple should be sterilised and kept in a clean place. Hygiene is very important.
- Infections can occur through contact (kissing), through air (coughing and sneezing near the baby) or through water and milk. All these should be avoided.

NUTRITION

Breastfeeding:

- Babies can be put to the breast as soon as they are born and should only be breastfed as far as possible.
- The earliest secretion in the breast – colostrum – is good for the baby. It is full of nutrients and immune bodies to protect the baby. Mothers should breastfeed their baby as often and as many times as demanded/needed. No top feeds need be given.
- Mothers should clean their breasts before and after each feed.
- After each feed the baby should be burped by holding it upright on the shoulder to expel the air swallowed while feeding.
- Breast feeding should be continued even if the mother is ill with minor problems like fever, cold, etc.
- There may be problems with breastfeeding due to inverted nipples, cracks, etc. as well as defects in the baby's lips. In such cases, the mother should get advice.
- Lactating mothers should drink adequate amounts of liquid.
- Worried and tense state of mind of the mother may result in less breast milk. Mothers need to rest when their babies sleep.
- Bottle-fed babies also need to be held close and cuddled during feed times.

SAFETY

- Babies should never be left unattended, especially when they are awake.
- Babies should never be shaken or tossed about, as it can cause permanent damage to the brain.
- Babies should not be exposed to smoke, especially from cigarettes.
- They should not be kept in extreme heat or cold.
- They should never be put face down to sleep.
- As far as possible, mothers should not be lying down while feeding the baby.

SPECIAL ATTENTION

During the second, third or fourth weeks after birth, there is a need to consult a doctor, if the baby shows any of the following signs of developmental delay:

- does not open mouth when nipple touches it
- does not respond to sounds of humming or singing. Unaffected by even loud sounds, the eyes and body do not move in response
- does not follow a moving object with eye movements
- limbs are very stiff or completely floppy
- continuous abnormal movements of limbs take place

BONDING

From the moment of birth, a natural bond develops between the mother and the baby. Bonding with the father and other caregivers will also develop from infancy. Bonding is strengthened with experiences that promote contact between the baby and the primary caregiver. A feeling of closeness, connection and commitment are all related to the bonding process. They help the baby to feel protected, safe and secure.

Infants seek a loving response, closeness and contact through crying and clinging. They need the confidence of being protected by parent/caregivers, when they feel they are in danger, distressed, hurt, ill, upset, frightened or uncomfortable.

Bonding relies on:

- Timely, appropriate, sensitive, loving, consistent, reliable care-giving, which includes physical contact, hugging and cuddling.
- Eye contact and gentle words when in distress.
- Quick response to the infant's cries.
- Speaking in a warm, caring and loving manner.

The parent-child relationship has a major impact on all aspects of child development. It helps children feel loved and secure, and they will grow up trusting others around them. Children in secure relationships are able to handle social relationships in school and when they have to take care of their emotional and social needs.

Children who are well bonded will:

- Easily move away from parents and become fully involved in play activity.
- Explore the environment freely and take advantage of opportunities to learn new skills.
- Have better social skills with their peers and will be able to manage their impulses and feelings later in life.
- Have problem-solving skills and reduced risk of behavioural problems.

Children who have been neglected and

- spoken to in a loud and sharp voice
- not been immediately comforted
- not been shown affection and often heard negatives about themselves
- have received inconsistent responses from parents or caregivers.

Often

- lack confidence that their parent or caregiver will comfort them.
- carry a feeling of being unworthy of love and attention.
- feel unimportant and have a low self-esteem.
- exaggerate their usual behaviour signals and are not comforted easily.
- will be forced to develop their own strategies of calming and achieving comfort, which may not be acceptable to parents.
- are anxious and not fully involved in play, constantly checking for parents and caregiver or totally ignore and avoid their parents.

ii. LOOKER STAGE (2 - 5 MONTHS)

Providing stimulation to all the senses.

From this stage, babies actively start exploring their surroundings through all their senses.

Picture 1

Babies learn about the world by seeing, touching, tasting, hearing and smelling.

- They enjoy touching, seeing, hearing, smelling and tasting everything they come in contact with.
- When they are taken out, they see people and nature, hear sounds like traffic and other noises, smell foods and flowers, their senses are stimulated and this increases their understanding of the world they live in.
- As they are held upright they can get a broad view of what is around them by turning their heads.

Picture 2

Babies enjoy trying to imitate your sounds and smiles.

- Infants respond to sounds and facial expressions. They watch adults' expressions and respond with their own body gestures, sounds and facial expressions.
- Simple words should be repeated to them, and they will respond with smiles and sounds. They are often delighted with cooing and gurgling sounds and try to imitate them.
- Repeating sounds infants make, helps their vocalisation.

Picture 3

Babies need to be cuddled to feel happy, healthy and safe.

- When babies are cuddled by their parents, they feel happy and confident that they are loved.
- A deep relationship based on love, that will last a lifetime is being formed.
- The degree of security that children establish at this stage is critical for their confidence and self-esteem when they leave the safe environment of the home later.

	SENSE OF SELF	PHYSICAL	RELATIONSHIP	UNDERSTANDING	COMMUNICATION
	"I have found a way to comfort and calm myself."	*"I need opportunities to discover what my body can do."*	*"I love it when you play and talk gently with me."*	*"I learn about my world when you put interesting things near me."*	*"Talk to me about what's happening. It will help me to use more words when I start talking."*
WHAT	Babies put their fingers in their mouths to comfort themselves. This gives them a sense of well-being. It is a major accomplishment when they provide comfort for themselves without relying on the adult.	Babies learn to roll over and also lift their heads up. They reach out to objects, explore their own hands and feet and put them in their mouth.	Playing gentle games strengthens the relationship between infants and parents. They turn away, or are cranky when the game is over. They start smiling in response to be called or spoken to.	While playing, babies will gaze at objects for long periods to understand them. They recognise familiar activities and respond by their body language or making sounds. If any object or a person is out of sight, babies do not look for them.	Babies love to listen to the sounds of words, and will respond through coos, smiles, facial expressions and body movements. They are not able to understand what the word means, but they will begin to practise similar noises.
WHY	Babies use their mouths as learning tools and often start thumbsucking at this stage. Their initial learning starts by putting objects in the mouth.	At this stage, babies are physically active, and are trying to learn from their own bodies. When they lift their heads up, they can see more of their world.	This 'social smile' is an important milestone in child development. They need to be left alone after a game to calm down.	Introducing babies to new environments and objects, creates an opportunity for them to explore their surroundings through reaching out, looking, touching, smelling and tasting.	Babies learn to communicate through the variety of sounds they hear. When adults talk to babies, it helps them connect words to objects.
HOW	Parents must however continue to respond immediately and sensitively to the baby's needs. Pacifiers may be used to comfort the baby at this stage in case of constant thumbsucking. It is necessary to ensure the hygiene of the pacifier.	Bright, colourful toys, rattles and jingling bells should be shown to babies. They can be left alone to entertain themselves for some time, but an adult should be nearby and make sure that the baby is safe on the floor or in the crib.	All adults in the family should interact with babies whenever possible but be sensitive to the child's individual cues. Having fun and enjoyable times together should be a regular part of the day.	Providing new / different objects everyday for babies to look at or hear them rattle, is a good activity. Safe and interesting, simple objects within the home should be placed within the reach of the baby to play with. Children should be supported while sitting, since they are not able to sit yet.	Pointing out and naming objects within babies' vision will help in the development of their communication skills. Adults should use simple words, sing songs and repeat them often, so that babies get familiar with the sounds and are introduced to the world of language.

HEALTH AND HYGIENE

- Babies should be bathed every day and dressed in clean, cotton clothes.
- Clothes and nappies used for babies should be washed with soap and water and sun dried.
- Babies tend to put their hands and the mother's hands in their mouth. Hands should be washed clean, especially before feeding.
- If the baby has loose motions, water boiled with a pinch of salt and a spoon of sugar in one glass (ORS) should be given as often as possible, and then the baby should be taken to a doctor. If there is vomiting also, a doctor should be consulted immediately.
- The baby must be taken to the doctor if fast breathing is present along with cough or cold or if he/she has convulsions.
- First, second and third doses of the triple antigen and polio drops should be given as the doctor or PHC advises.
- The baby's weight should be recorded to monitor the growth. The baby should be double the birth weight by the end of the sixth month.

NUTRITION

- Breastfeeding must continue.
- If the mother's milk is not sufficient and the baby cries constantly, top feeds should be started as a supplement.
- Fruit juices and *ragi* porridge can be introduced in the fourth month. When introducing fruit juice, start with one kind of juice and in small quantities. Keep it going for three days and increase the quantity each day. If there is no negative reaction, like diarrhoea, introduce the next juice.
- This method should be followed when introducing cereal, vegetables, fruits and meats.
- This method is important when the child is being weaned from breast milk to regular milk or formula as well. This is done to make sure that the child is not allergic to certain foods.

SAFETY

- Babies must be watched at all times.
- Very small objects should not be given to babies to play with. They may swallow them.
- Rough handling of the baby should be avoided. It can harm them.
- The surroundings in the home must be kept clean as the baby is starting to move and put things into its mouth. This is the safety measure.

SPECIAL ATTENTION

Adults should be observant and consult the doctor, if by the age of four months, the baby does not perform the following:

- does not hold head up
- does not pay attention to new faces
- does not smile or respond to familiar voices
- does not grasp objects or reach out to objects
- does not babble or initiate vocal play
- does not attempt to remove a cloth placed on face

PARENTING SKILLS - THE 5 Ps.

There are five important skills in parenting – They are five Ps.

Passion – When parents give unconditional love and attention, children thrive. In other words, parents have to be passionate about their children and give them their best. A loving, caring relationship in the family will help children develop well. Both parents should work in harmony and have openness between them so that children can learn from them and gain confidence.

Positive inputs – Children who grow up with appreciation are better adjusted and more open to making changes for the better. They always turn to parents for advice and they will remain good friends. Why not be positive in our approach to correcting, rather than using negative ways like verbal abuse and punishment. Providing positive reinforcement for good behaviour, encourages the child to repeat the behaviour and also develop good self-esteem.

Patience – Children need time to learn. Parents should be patient and understand children's frustrations when they are unable to achieve a skill. As they take time to understand and master skills, it may sometimes exasperate parents who are pressed for time and energy. As adults we should give them full attention while interacting with children. We have to train ourselves to see the situation from the children's point of view.

Providing practice and being consistent – Children, like adults, need repeated exercises or exposure to learn. Practice is necessary before they can master a skill and move on to the next. They should be allowed to repeat an action or sounds as many times as they want. Consistency is essential if children are to understand the rationale for any instructions and rules. Reward and punishment work differently for different children. Whatever the strategy, consistency in instructions and reactions are of paramount importance. Both parents and caregivers have to stand by it, at all times, consistently, firmly, but not rigidly.

Providing opportunities to learn - Every experience will enhance the child's learning and mastery of skills. The parent needs to identify learning situations that provide various opportunities for the child, either by taking the child to the situation or creating the situation for the child. Parent should actively be involved in the learning process and should reinforce the learning by repetition.

iii. SITTER-CRAWLER STAGE (5 - 8 MONTHS)

Giving opportunities to explore.

Picture 1

Babies learn by exploring objects in their home.

- Babies love to touch and hold objects and drop or throw them to see what happens. They also love to make a lot of noise by throwing or banging objects. They become more independent because of their developing physical skills.
- They crawl everywhere and try to sit up. Initially they need support but will be able to sit by the end of this stage.
- They can be independent of the mother for short periods of time, but like to be close to their caregiver as they play.
- Encouraging them to explore and play with safe household objects results in developing curiosity and instils a love for learning in the child.

Picture 2

Babies can now recognise their toys even if they are partly covered.

- They are learning that objects don't disappear if they are out of sight (object permanence).
- They will not look initially, for anything out of sight, they recognise it only if a part of a familiar object is visible.
- This is a good game to play to help their memory.

Picture 3

Babies do things over and over again to learn how to make things happen.

- Repeating the same activity helps babies learn and master their skills. Repetition helps in reinforcement.
- Patiently picking up the same objects and allowing the baby to repeat actions, helps the baby to build confidence.
- To learn about objects, they move towards them and reach out to them.

	SENSE OF SELF	PHYSICAL	RELATIONSHIP	UNDERSTANDING	COMMUNICATION
	"Who's that?"	*"Help me learn to crawl by letting me play on the floor."*	*"I feel so safe with you but others can frighten me."*	*"Peek-a-boo! I'm learning that things are still there even though I can't see them."*	*"I don't understand many words but I'm learning by imitating your sounds."*
WHAT	Mirrors attract babies' attention. They realise that what they see is a familiar person. They delight in watching the movements of the person in the mirror. Then they know that the other image is their own face.	Babies become more independent in their movements. Distant vision, following moving objects and eye-hand co-ordination also develop. They can reach out to objects with one hand and also transfer objects from hand to hand.	Babies recognise their parent's smell, touch, voice and appearance. They prefer their significant caregiver to everyone else. They may refuse to go to strangers. This is natural and is called stranger anxiety.	Babies repeat actions over and over again to understand how things happen. "Peek-a-boo" is a favourite game at this stage. Babies also understand that objects do not go away even if they cannot see them.	Babies can now utter a few sounds that sound like speech. They enjoy music and rhythm. They try to imitate the sounds they hear. They repeat sounds as if in conversation. This is called babbling.
WHY	Babies begin to understand that they are separate entities. They begin to recognise themselves.	Babies seek opportunities to explore, experiment and experience the world around them, which helps them to develop to their full potential.	They become aware of strangers as separate from people whom they see everyday. They may whine, show sadness and cry.	Children learn through repetition. They love this game and play it over and over again. They begin to understand the concept of object permanence.	Babies are beginning to understand that sounds have meaning and they represent objects. This is how they learn language.
HOW	Calling them by their name often helps them link their name to themselves. Encouragement and approval motivates them to try new actions and develops self-esteem.	Parents should place objects in various positions around the baby so that they are motivated to move, grasp, reach, release and play with them. Objects should be large and not get stuck in the throat when babies put them in their mouths.	Babies should be comforted and reassured when they show anxiety on seeing a new person or place. They should not be forced to go to strangers or say hello to them if they resist.	Babies need a variety of activities where the caregiver is involved. However, they also need to be encouraged to have brief periods of independent playtime.	Parents should talk to their baby in normal language and explain their actions. They should sing or play music and repeat rhymes and read to them, even though babies do not yet understand everything.

HEALTH AND HYGIENE

- Hygiene is very important while preparing food and feeding the baby. Mothers should wash their hands before feeding the baby.
- Food prepared for children should be used immediately. If kept for a long time, food may get spoilt or infected.
- Diarrhoea in the baby should not be attributed only to teething. They pick up infection from their own hands as well.
- To prevent dehydration when baby suffers from diarrhoea - extra fluids with a spoon of sugar and a pinch of salt in a glass of boiled water (Oral Rehydration Solution) should be given frequently.
- Rice *kanji,* buttermilk, orange juice, coconut water can also be given.
- Babies must be taken to the doctor when they are sick. Home remedies should not be tried as this may delay the treatment.
- Toilet-training can start, from the time the child sits up, by seating the child regularly on a potty.

NUTRITION

- Breastfeeding should be continued.
- Milk should be supplemented with traditional family foods in small quantities. Soft well-cooked food that can be easily digested should be introduced.
- Semi-solids must be given at least 4 times a day.
- While feeding, the baby should be in a sitting position.
- When the baby shows signs of teething, chewing foods can be introduced.
- At this age, babies can hold the cup with both hands. Encourage them to drink by themselves even if they are clumsy. Sippers are helpful.

SAFETY

- Since babies crawl at this stage, surroundings have to be clean and hygienic. NEVER LEAVE BABIES ALONE TO CRAWL
- Sharp and small objects should not be left within baby's reach.
- Steps should be barred from access to the child during crawling.
- Furniture and cupboards should be properly secured and free of sharp edges.
- Potential dangers such as an open electrical socket or the sharp edge of a table should be avoided.
- The house should be made safe for babies.

SPECIAL ATTENTION

The following are signs of developmental delays. A doctor or special educator should be consulted if at the end of the eighth month, the baby:

- is floppy and does not hold its head up
- does not reach for objects
- does not sit up
- does not show any interest in people or surroundings
- does not imitate others around
- does not respond well to social play, ie. 'peek a boo'

WHY CHILDREN SHOULD PLAY

CHILD DEVELOPMENT

- Creative
- Happy
- Innovative
- Learning
- Discovering
- Demonstrating
- Exploring
- Vibrant
- Experimenting
- Lively
- Observing
- Practising
- Managing
- Enjoying
- Noticing
- Trying Out

What is 'play'?

Children learn best through playing and every play activity contributes to the stimulation of all areas of development and helps children grow into well-blanced people, while they also enjoy themselves.

While **we** think children are 'only playing', ***they*** are actually LEARNING

- about themselves, their likes and dislikes and what makes them happy.
- about others and understanding the world around them
- while seeing, smelling, manipulating and actively experimenting and exploring
- social skills and strengthening relationships when they share, take turns and negotiate
- to cope with difficult situations like loss, separation, trauma of pain and stress, when they meet a challenge during play and overcome it.
- to communicate when talking about their game and thus practise speech and language skills.
- concepts of symbolism which enhances their imagination, eg, a chair becomes a bus or plane.
- to make choices and decisions and take better control of their own life.
- the foundation of reading, writing, numeracy, by using fine motor skills, noticing differences in small objects, letters and figures, etc.
- values like sharing, helping, consideration, compassion, sense of fair play and honesty, justice, losing gracefully, team spirit, sensitivity to different abilities and to strive for excellence.
- an understanding of culture, tradition, mythology, ecology and natural phenomena.

Most children go through the following stages of play before they can share

- Solitary play – enjoy playing with toys and playthings on their own but love to have their parents nearby.
- Parallel play – they like to have other children play beside them, but are not yet ready to interact and share.
- Interactive play – is the next stage when they enjoy playing with other children, but they will need the parent/caregiver nearby to negotiate the conflicts and difficulties that arise.

iv. CRUISER STAGE (8 - 13 MONTHS)

Recognising cause and effect

Picture 1

While exploring, babies might hurt others accidentally.

- Babies are naturally curious and may pull, push and grab anything which attracts their attention. In that process they may hurt other children without being aware of it.
- Shouting or scolding will not help children understand that they have hurt someone. It damages their self-confidence and hinders exploration.
- They have to be gently guided and taught through example.
- Teaching gentle touching is a valuable lesson.

Picture 2

Babies are curious about everything. They are learning to choose what they want to play with.

- They are beginning to stand up with support and are more mobile.
- All dangerous objects like glass, sharp things, hot food items and medicines should be kept away from babies' reach and sharp- edged furniture removed.
- At the same time, we should place a variety of interesting, safe articles for them to discover, thus increasing their urge to explore and enjoy the learning process.

Picture 3

Babies begin to think about what will happen as they drop, bang and throw.

- They enjoy searching for things and like looking into drawers or boxes. It satisfies their curiosity about everything. They are not trying to annoy their parents.
- Patience and a good, gentle approach are to be practised by parents while checking them.
- Babies start to make choices in terms of toys and activities. They should be allowed to choose. They will repeat activities again and again.
- It is not necessary to buy them expensive toys. Household articles (spoons, plastic cups, wooden ladles, cardboard boxes etc.) will all serve as playthings, provided they are safe to play with.

	SENSE OF SELF	PHYSICAL	RELATIONSHIP	UNDERSTANDING	COMMUNICATION
	"I am learning to care for others as you have cared for me."	*"I am practicing how to walk and do new things. Please keep me safe!"*	*"I am upset when you leave, but I am learning to trust that you always come back."*	*"I watch you. I try it. That is how I learn."*	*"I learn the meaning of words as you name objects over and over again."*
WHAT	They imitate simple actions of adults, including showing care and concern to their favourite toy, as others have shown towards them. They are keen observers and imitators.	Babies can now hold and lift themselves up. They may begin to walk by holding on to things. Inability to perform a task leads to frustration and tantrums in babies.	Babies get very attached to their main caregivers and can get anxious if they suddenly go away, even for a brief period. They will cry and be sad, but know they will return if told so.	They are curious about everything and will imitate and then try it out again and again, and learn.	Babies can communicate even without words, through looks, sounds and body language. They begin to name body parts and learn the names easily. They can understand simple questions and commands.
WHY	Babies identify strongly with the parents. They pick up behaviour and habits from the adults they see.	Reaching out to objects is a way of exploration. Temper tantrums are a natural expression of frustration and a part of growing up. Development is occurring daily, so safety is a priority.	Babies are thinking beings, and should be told what to expect. Otherwise they will fret because of fear and anxiety.. They must trust that their caregivers will come back - it will ease separation anxiety.	They want to know more about everything. Their memory is also developing. They can remember the effect of their actions and will repeat them to get the same effect. Imitation and repetition helps infants learn new skills.	They make an effort to communicate more purposefully. Naming will help the infant understand the connection between words and objects.
HOW	They need to be hugged and reassured when they begin to express emotions. They learn by imitation, so adults should be careful about their own actions, emotions and speech.	Parents should be supportive and encourage them to try again and again to complete a task, to give them the sense of achievement. The environment should be safe to allow babies to stand and walk.	Babies should be encouraged to wave to the mother when she leaves, and be reassured that she will come back. They can also be left with other caregivers in the family. The will help the infant's adjustment to the separation from the parent. When you return, inform the child.	There should be a safe environment in which babies can explore. Adults should do simple actions slowly and show babies how it is done. Children will try and want to do it again.	By naming objects and body parts repeatedly, adults help to develop the early vocabulary of babies. Looking at picture books together is a pleasant way of learning language. Parents and caregivers should encourage the baby to learn and repeat new words at every opportunity.

HEALTH AND HYGIENE

- When the baby completes 9 months, immunisation against mumps, measles and rubella has to be given.
- Teething starts at this stage. Since babies put all that they get hold of into their mouth, chances of getting diarrhoea through infection will be high.
- If this happens, home-made fluids like rice *kanji*, buttermilk, juice and coconut water can be given frequently. This will prevent dehydration. O.R.S. mixture should be given frequently.
- If the baby starts vomiting, does not pass urine and is in a drowsy state, he/she should be taken to the doctor immediately.
- When the baby has a cold or cough there may be fast breathing or convulsions. If that happens, the baby should be taken to the doctor without any delay.
- Toilet-training should continue with regularity till the child associates the activity with passing urine and motion.

NUTRITION

- By the end of the first year, the baby's weight increases by three times the birth weight.
- Breast milk, or cow's milk should be continued.
- This should be supplemented with sufficient quantities of soft, cooked, family foods like *idli*, boiled vegetables or *khichdi*.
- At this stage, babies should be given food of different tastes and textures (eg. - carrot, cabbage or banana).
- Food should be given 5-6 times a day.
- Boiled drinking water should be given to the baby. Care should be taken to see that the baby's fingers are clean so that infection can be prevented.

SAFETY

- Babies should never be left alone.
- Since the babies are now trying to stand and walk, the home should be free of any risks. Dangerous objects like glass, medicine, sharp objects and hot food items should be kept out of reach.
- Small objects should not be left lying around, as babies may put them in their mouths.
- Babies should not be tossed in the air. This might cause permanent damage.
- Pinching babies' cheeks should not be done as it hurts them.

SPECIAL ATTENTION

ALL CHILDREN ARE NOT ALIKE IN DEVELOPMENT. Although developmental milestones give a general idea of the activities which children perform during the developmental period, one cannot predict the rate at which development takes place in each child. Some children follow the normal process, some children get delayed. However, there is a need to consult a doctor **if there is any observable delay or when the child**:

- does not crawl forward to reach an object
- does not pull self to standing position
- does not hold with two hands and drink from a cup
- does not use words or gestures to indicate wants
- does not search for objects that are partly or fully hidden
- does not make connections between action and results
- does not look for adult approval when doing activities
- does not communicate with adults through gestures and facial expression, even though he/she has a limited vocabulary

TOYS AND PLAYMATES

Children's toys are many and varied, as are the ways in which children play. Games and toys become important tools for the child to initiate action and explore the world around and express emerging creativity. Any object selected by the child with an intention to explore becomes a toy.

The parent is the first playmate of the child and the most preferred play object.

The different emotions displayed, the variety of activities undertaken, the patience shown by the caregiver enhance the spirit of play, the quality of learning and the degree of bonding between the child and the caregiver.

As a playmate, the degree of involvement of the parent, the extent of creativity in the process and the pace of the activity to keep up with the child's interest, all determine the child's involvement in the play.

Important aspects of play

- Repetition - repeating activities until the child fully acquires the skill or the understanding. While adults may find it boring, for the child, it is the process and method of learning.
- Creativity - they create and imagine, often beyond the game or object. The role of parents/caregivers is to encourage them to continue to do so.
- There is no right or wrong way to play–a child cannot fail–it is their individual way of creativity, and they will learn and play in their own way and at their own rate.
- Violence of any form to themselves or anyone else should be corrected when playing.

Guidelines to play with the child

- Observe the play – watch and discover what interests children, see through the child's eyes.
- Be at the children's level and keep eye to eye contact, physical contact and togetherness with the child.
- Follow the child's lead – children know what they want to play – they will lose interest if the adult takes over the activity. The adult is the assistant – only to add, expand, enrich and not to lead.
- Offer encouragement to continue to try and succeed and handle conflict among themselves, to appreciate effort and achievement.
- Match the child's ability to play – challenges should match the child's developmental level. Those that are beyond the child's level are frustrating and cause a feeling of inadequacy.
- Play through everyday activities and safe household things. Children enjoy helping out with all household tasks; allow them without gender bias.

Children do not always need expensive toys to play with. Simple everyday objects around the house, when converted by them and others, can be versatile and used as toys in many innovative ways for learning

v. WALKER STAGE (13 - 18 MONTHS)

Making it helpful for the baby to explore.

Picture 1

Toddlers learn new concepts such as 'in' and 'out', 'up' and 'down'.

- Toddlers learn by trying out different actions, for themselves in order to understand.
- Various household items and activities can be provided to teach simple concepts.
- When they are doing any activity, appropriate words to name their actions can be repeatedly given. That will help them to relate the words to the action and learn a language.
- To help the child develop more words, the caregiver should identify the different objects in the surroundings with their correct names.

Picture 2

Toddlers learn by imitating. They need many opportunities to practice.

- Water play is one of the most enjoyable activities for children. Adults should provide opportunities for them to play in and with water.
- Imitating helps toddlers to learn, and water play helps them in hand-eye coordination.
- Toddlers can be encouraged to carry out simple and safe variations of adult activities like wiping bowls, etc.

Picture 3

Toddlers are very active. See that they are safe as they walk, run and climb.

- Toddlers love to walk. Going out to a park or in the garden provides that opportunity. They like to try out their own new physical skills.
- Adults should be around to encourage their efforts and keep them safe.
- Older siblings should be encouraged to play with the younger one. This increases bonding and develops a tendency to share.

	SENSE OF SELF	PHYSICAL	RELATIONSHIP	UNDERSTANDING	COMMUNICATION
	"I get upset when I can't have something I want. Calmly distract me with something I can play with. Clear limits help me feel secure."	*"I am learning to control my fingers so I can make marks on paper."*	*"I explore things because I want to learn. I'm not trying to upset you."*	*"Playing with blocks helps me to learn about shapes and sizes. I'll need that later for math and reading."*	*"Looking at books with you gives me the chance to try and say words."*
WHAT	Toddlers display emotions to seek attention, and express independence by protesting. They want to explore. Toddlers may try to take things apart and put them together again to understand objects.	Their finger skills improve. Toddlers need opportunities to exercise their finger control, eg. self-feeding, picking up objects, scribbling with a chalk or a crayon. While exploring, they love to crawl under tables and cots, into boxes and onto things.	Toddlers would like to spend time playing in water. The toddler's activities of trying out new experiences may be inconvenient for the adults, but they are not trying to upset them.	They begin to learn about things that are around them by handling them in a variety of ways. They may toss, pull, dump, stack or group by shape or colour. Every activity can be made into a rich learning experience.	Picture bocks fascinate toddlers. They love to flip the pages and read the story with parents and grandparents. They learn to match the pictures seen in the book with objects, and name them. Toddlers understand more words than they can say. They can communicate non-verbally by pointing, nodding, crying, laughing or throwing.
WHY	Toddlers feels more secure if they know what to expect. They know that the adult will give comfort and reassurance when they have a hard time controlling their emotions.	They like to practise their new abilities. As they master their skills, their self-esteem grows.	While exploring and experimenting, messing up is part of the learning process. It is age appropriate and they are following their innate need to know how things work.	They are experimenting, discovering and reasoning. They begin to learn that objects have functions and imitate adults' actions.	Showing pictures and reading a story repeatedly from a book develops communication skills. Telling stories in sequence helps them to develop memory and think logically. Talking about any event/objects that catch their interest helps in their language development.
HOW	Adults need to remain calm and patient during tantrums and avoid physical punishment, shouting, hitting, threatening or isolating the child. Adults should calmly comfort and reassure the child, or distract, remove or replace the activity or the object causing the tantrum.	Adults can motivate toddlers to learn new skills by providing support and encouraging them with a word of praise. At this stage, they should have opportunities to move around freely and see and feel everything.	Adults need to be patient with toddlers and allow them to try out anything as long as it is not harmful. They should be encouraged to explore and express emotions, as these are important learning activities.	They should be provided with a variety of colourful and safe objects to help them understand similarities, sizes, etc. Adults should support their play and talk to them about what they are doing.	Adults should be patient and encourage them to talk. Repetition of new words learnt, is very important.

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HEALTH AND HYGIENE

- At 18 months, the toddler must be administered the 1st booster dose of triple antigen and oral polio drops.
- The weight should be taken every month and the growth monitored.
- When the baby suffers from diarrhoea, extra fluids should be given frequently.
- Fizzy, sugary drinks should be avoided. Boiled and cooled water is the best drink.
- As toilet-training continues and the toddler associates urine and motion with the toilet, they will start to indicate their need to go. Parents should be alert. Occasional accidents of soiling should not be reprimanded.

NUTRITION

- Self-feeding should be encouraged, even though it is messy.
- Soft, hygienic and well-cooked food is to be given.
- The food quantity should be increased gradually.
- Children usually know what and how much they want to eat. Adults should not force feed them.
- If they are distracted, adults have to ensure that they have enough nourishment, even if they have to be coaxed into eating.

SAFETY

- Toddlers should not be given sharp objects to play with.
- Caretakers should supervise when they are at play. Care must be taken to keep the kitchen stove, buckets filled with water and other dangerous objects out of reach.
- The child should be told about dangers and not made fearful.
- Medicines must be kept locked away.
- Household cleaning materials should be kept out of reach of children.
- They are unaware of potential danger, they should be watched.

SPECIAL ATTENTION

There is cause for concern and need for action if the baby, at 13-18 months:

- does not attempt to walk independently
- does not understand spoken words, or use words meaningfully
- does not display a special relationship with familiar people
- does not brush teeth, wash hands or identify body parts
- does not display anxiety when separated from the mother for a while
- is not curious about activities happening around the baby
- does not respond to its name
- does not make eye contact

THE WHAT AND HOW OF FEEDING BABIES

WHEN	WHAT	HOW
Birth - 2 months	Only breast milk	• Babies have to be held close in the right posture while feeding. • They need to be fed very often as their stomachs are small. They indicate clearly when they are hungry. • They will feed slowly and mothers should be patient. • They need to be burped after feeds to expel the wind in their stomachs. Otherwise they tend to bring up the milk.
2 - 5 months	Breast milk + Fruit juice + *kanji (ragi)*	• During feeding, mothers should be calm, and should hold the baby close while talking and singing to them. • At times, babies may seem to be fussy – they may be uncomfortable, or not hungry, or may want to sleep or want to be changed. Mothers should be sensitive to their needs. • Babies tend to suck their hands, sometimes to burp. They are also learning to use their tongue and muscles.
5 - 13 months	Breast milk + mashed cereals and vegetables	• Babies at this stage are ready for solids, and become aware of how others eat, and how to swallow. • They learn to eat from a spoon and open their mouths when they are fed. They also learn to drink from a cup. • They may take some time to chew. They will not open their mouths when they are full. They may also dislike some foods. They should not be force-fed. • New foods should be tried only when they are comfortable. Babies choke easily, and have to be given small mouthfuls. • The food should always be fresh, not more than three hours after it has been prepared. • By the time babies are one year old, they try to feed themselves. They may be messy, but they are trying and experimenting, and should be allowed to help themselves.
1-2 years	Milk + non-spicy family food	• Babies mostly feed themselves and cannot wait when they are hungry. • They are very active, but should sit down while eating. • They may prefer certain foods at different times – this is normal.
2 - 6 years	Milk + balanced meals	• Children enjoy planning, deciding the menu and helping the mother. • They eat better when they get what they have asked for, and are not too hungry or tired. • They show definite preference for certain foods. • They will gradually learn to eat with the family. • However, if meals are delayed they will become cranky.

vi. DOER STAGE (18 - 24 MONTHS)

Understanding the world around and learning simple concepts.

Picture 1

Finding hidden objects helps children learn and remember.

- Playing hide and seek with objects is a very interesting game for the toddler. It develops the skill to memorise and recall.
- Parents should shed their inhibition and get down physically to play with children, at their level. This helps children relate to activities easily and helps in learning. This continues the bonding process.

Picture 2

Children are curious about how things work. Pouring, mixing and building introduce them to science.

- Sand play provides the toddler with an opportunity to explore and experience various concepts by playing in different ways. It increases creativity and manual dexterity.
- Parents should give a chance for the toddlers to play independently, and with other children, side by side. They are not yet ready to share and play interactively.
- Playing with other children under adult supervision allows them to set rules for themselves and hence improves their communication skills and relationships.
- Toddlers need to experience these activities repeatedly to discover and pave the way for future learning.

Picture 3

Children are practising to control their actions by jumping, pushing and pulling.

- Push and pull activities help toddlers to develop good co-ordination to move their body and learn to balance while walking.
- Controlling objects by pushing and pulling as they wish, enhances self-esteem in toddlers.
- Parents should appreciate their toddler's efforts to learn a new skill. It makes the toddlers feel good about themselves.
- Parents should not insist on objects that they think the child should play with. Instead, allow the toddlers to discover their own objects for play as long as they are safe, eg, a child may want to push around his toy chair instead of his toy push cart.

	SENSE OF SELF	PHYSICAL	RELATIONSHIP	UNDERSTANDING	COMMUNICATION
	"I like to do things by myself. I will slowly improve if you give me a chance."	*"I am very active now! Help me to find good ways to use my energy."*	*"Playing with you helps me learn how to play with others."*	*"I will understand my world better as I learn to sort things into groups. Help me notice 'same' and 'different', or 'hard' and 'soft'!"*	*"Let's sing together. It helps me to learn words, feelings and rhythm. It's fun!"*
WHAT	Children begin to feed themselves and try out new activities. They can decide how much and what to eat from a selection of nutritious food. Tantrums can occur when they are frustrated. A mess while eating is inevitable.	Children are practising to control and co-ordinate their body, by walking, backwards, down the stairs, running, pushing, pulling or dancing. They are very energetic. At this stage, toddlers can express hunger, thirst, tiredness and indicate when they need to go to the toilet.	Children can play a game following instructions. Playing with a ball is the most fascinating play for them. They begin to enjoy shared activities and learn to take turns.	Children discover the nature of things in different ways. They are learning different textures, shapes and sizes. They learn various concepts by constantly experimenting and sorting.	Children enjoy music and singing. Their vocabulary increases. Communication is improving and their shyness decreases.
WHY	They become increasingly self-reliant and assertive. Children's happiness is essential for learning. They need, through practice, to increase their abilities.	Toilet-training is easy at this stage as they gain control of their muscles. Any self-reliant skill gained, enhances the level of self-confidence.	Children at this stage like to play beside other children of the same age rather than with them. They are discovering their own likes and dislikes in relationships with people other than the caregiver.	Children are more purposeful and predictable at this age, and are eager to learn. Being able to notice small differences and similarities will give them a skill with letters and numbers, later.	Music and chanting stimulate the brain. They encourage learning and help with pronunciation and understanding of words.
HOW	Adults should give unconditional and consistent love and care in spite of tantrums and be sensitive to children's needs. Responding promptly reassures them. Appreciating positive behaviour enhances self-esteem and makes them feel good. Distract the child during a tantrum, and avoid giving in to his/her demands.	Patience and alertness on the part of the parents are required for toilet-training. This is the time to encourage good habits like tidying up and sharing. Provide opportunities for both outdoor and indoor activities but close supervision and encouragement should be provided.	We must provide words for their actions, imagination and fantasy, which will later help in conversation and lay a strong foundation for a good relationship. They love to play with their first playmates - their parents.	While doing the household work adults can show interest and interact with the children by talking, showing, questioning, appreciating and adding a word related to their activity. Children should be exposed to many different kinds of materials like sand, water and various objects in nature and at home.	Adults should be innovative and make simple musical instruments and toys with things around the house. Providing a word or name for every object helps to increase the children's vocabulary. Singing also adds to vocabulary and teaches rhythm and rhyme.

HEALTH AND HYGIENE

- Roadside eatables like candy should not be given as they are likely to be infected. These are not nutritious.
- Monitoring the weight, growth and developmental milestones should be continued.
- Do not treat ailments with over-the-counter medicines or home remedies.
- The use of diapers should be gradually stopped.
- Children should not be kept in wet and soiled diapers, as this can lead to infection.

NUTRITION

- Children can be given normal family food.
- By this time mothers should have weaned them from breast milk. Weaning is an emotional time both for the mother and the child. It is a natural process, and if the child feels secure to move on, it is a happy experience for both the mother and the child.
- Nutritious food is to be given three to four times a day - breakfast, lunch, snack and dinner.

SAFETY

- Parents must ensure that all dangerous objects like knives, plastic bags, match boxes, razors, etc. are out of reach of the child. Since children are very active at this stage, it is important to keep the surroundings safe for them to move around without any obstructions.
- Children should be monitored very closely all the time, especially near swimming pools and market places.
- Avoid giving hard candy, nuts or any food that is a choking hazard.

SPECIAL ATTENTION

Seek help, if at the age of 18 months to 2 years, the child:

- does not walk or climb stairs independently
- is yet to say a few words
- is yet to identify common household objects, pictures in a book, persons by name
- does not follow simple instructions
- does not remove clothing to ease oneself in an identified place in a familiar setting
- is obsessed with a few activities to the extent of ignoring people and events in the environment over a long period of time

Though children develop differently, their needs are the same. They need love affection and encouragement and above all, recognition of them as persons.

COMMUNICATING WITH CHILDREN

Parents should be interested and attentive

Parents should be interested in the children's ideas and opinions. Children know when their parents are distracted by the telephone, TV, conversation or their own work. Only if children are allowed to express their ideas, opinions and feelings freely, they communicate without reservation.

Children should be encouraged to talk

Children are more likely to share their ideas and feelings when others think they are important. When they are given words and phrases that help them to express themselves and have conversations, their confidence levels go up . They are reassured that they are loved and valued.

Parents should listen patiently

Children often think faster than they speak and with limited vocabulary and experience in talking, they often take longer than adults to find the right word. They should be given time to talk .

Children should be heard out

Children's conversation should not be cut off before they have finished speaking. It is easy to form an opinion or to reject children's views before they finish what they have to say. It may be difficult to listen respectfully and not correct misconceptions, but their right to have and express their opinions should be respected.

Non-verbal messages are equally important

Many messages that children send are communicated non-verbally by their tone of voice, their facial expressions, their energy level, their posture or changes in their behaviour patterns. One of the important aspects of communication is the listening skill and being able to empathise with what is being said.

Adults often tend to ignore children and not communicate directly with them. Instead they speak to other adults about the child. This undermines the child's self-esteem and ability to communicate.

vii. EARLY TESTER STAGE (2 - 2½ YEARS)

Mastering various skills through structured activities and daily routine

Picture 1

Children get frustrated and act out their feelings. Give them the words to tell you how they feel.

- Children show their feelings of anger or unhappiness by gestures, body language, refusing to play or just by being stubborn. They don't have words to express their feelings.
- When they are forced to do something, are grabbed by other children, or their toys are taken away, they get angry, anxious, aggressive or throw tantrums.
- Parents have to be very patient, and help children to learn to express their feelings through language by giving them appropriate words and helping them understand their feelings. Books, songs and personal experience helps.
- Explaining their emotions to them will help them in gradually discovering constructive ways of displaying emotions and appropriate ways of handling strong feelings.

Picture 2

Children are excited about learning. They need a variety of opportunities.

- Children need to be provided with various learning experiences in a guided, encouraging and joyful atmosphere. They learn better when they are happy.
- Parents should adapt their activities in a safe setting for the child to test out and teach shapes, sizes, new words, etc.

Picture 3

Puzzles help children match shapes and sizes.

- Playing with puzzles is a stimulating, logical thinking activity, which improves fine motor skills.
- All activities of matching shapes and sizes are school readiness skills, which are vital for later academic learning.
- It develops a sense of accomplishment and pride in the completion of a task.

	SENSE OF SELF	PHYSICAL	RELATIONSHIP	UNDERSTANDING	COMMUNICATION
	"I feel respected when I have things I can call my own."	*"I want to do many new things, but I don't always know what is safe. Help me to learn."*	*"I need you to notice and tell me all the things I try to do well."*	*"1,2...I am starting to learn numbers."*	*"I can say a few words. Help me learn more."*
WHAT	At this age children are very possessive. They may have their own special toys. When allowed to keep their special toy, they feel valued and respected. They may initially share other toys.	Children try to perfect balancing abilities. They take risks that are beyond their physical abilities, making them prone to accidents. They will jump, climb and try to improve their physical skills.	They like to be included in family activities and enjoy helping. Children are learning to receive and give affection by hugging and kissing. They enjoy accomplishing simple, household tasks.	All activities are potential learning. They learn differences in measurements and quantities by observing. Children are now able to solve a problem in their mind, before reacting or responding in a game.	Children begin to listen and respond to commands. They enjoy playing guessing games. Children spend time talking to objects, to toys and self. It is normal. Children learn to communicate through words.
WHY	Children gain confidence and their self-esteem is strengthened when they are allowed their own possessions, which no one can share, especially their siblings.	Children at this age are able to run with a greater amount of co-ordination and can combine two actions at a time. They do not understand safety issues.	They require adult support and encouragement to help them through their many attempts. Everyday interactions build lasting and memorable relationships.	They are beginning to notice connections between objects such as a bird in the tree or a bat and ball. They begin to learn the words and concept of numbers, like one and many.	Learning new words can occur everywhere. Providing new words when showing and telling about an object increases the vocabulary and improves communication skills.
HOW	Sharing as a value should be encouraged and taught gradually. Parents and others at home should be role models to teach about sharing. Children should not be forced to share a toy if they resist vehemently.	Adults should not discourage them from testing their physical ability, as this may prevent them from taking any initiative. Instead they need to be watchful when children are playing and testing their own abilities, as they can take risks.	They should be included in family activities as it will help establish good relationships and help develop lifelong skills. Their efforts at helping should be appreciated. Only then will they continue to practise the activity.	Adults can help children learn about quantities and numbers from day-to-day activities, eg. counting fingers, toes, buttons, etc. Any routine activity can be converted into a game and a learning experience by involving them and letting them do it at their pace.	Adults should spend time talking to children and make all activities interactive by asking and encouraging questions and patiently listening or replying to them. Talking about everyday activities, creates a language-learning opportunity.

HEALTH AND HYGIENE

- As they play outdoors, they are exposed to worm infestations from the soil and dirty water.
- Children should be taught to wash their hands after they have finished playing and before eating or touching food.
- They should also be discouraged from putting their fingers and hands in their mouths. Children should have the skills to use the toilet on their own, and should be taught to clean up with help.
- With more exposure to the surroundings and in preschool, they catch coughs, colds and infections from other children. This is to be expected.
- Frequent colds and repeated infections may lead to chronic ear discharge.
- Giving medicines to children is a fine art. There have to be positive inputs about how the medicine is good for them. Frightening them that the alternative is an injection from the doctor is bad practice and will not help the child to take medication.

NUTRITION

- This is usually the weaning period, and children tend to give up milk which is a staple food. They do not get sufficient nourishment and tend to lose weight.
- Though children share the family food, their food should be less spicy and easily digestible.
- Children may take longer to eat or will be distracted with their pretend games and forget to eat properly. They have to be fed with patience.
- Oftentimes, children suffer from undernourishment at the age of two or two and a half, because their parents have stopped physically feeding the children with the idea of making them independent and to enable them to manage their daily life activities. Parents have to ensure that children get adequate nutrition to enhance their growth.

SAFETY

- At this age, children are eager to talk and may wander off with strangers. They may get tempted to try out new places and experiences.
- As children are very active, and take on more and more challenging tasks, adults have to be watchful and provide a safe setting to play in. All hazardous materials at home have to be kept away from children's reach.
- When in the car, children should be in the back seat and secured with a seat belt and should not be given anything to drink while the car is moving.

SPECIAL ATTENTION

Alert your doctor, if the child shows any of these:

- removes clothing from body
- does not indicate bladder and bowel control
- is not stable on feet when reaching for objects at height
- does not jump with both feet off the floor
- does not stack blocks
- misses mother/caregiver even if left for a short while
- does not speak clearly and continues to drool
- has difficulty climbing stairs
- does not participate in pretend play
- does not follow commands
- uses only single words to indicate needs

ARE YOU WORRIED?

Left-Handedness

Some children show a preference for using the left hand for all activities like holding, catching, eating and writing. This is natural and they should be allowed to do so. Correcting them, especially if done harshly, will result in confusion, clumsiness and delays in milestones, as the right half of the brain dominates their writing and logical thinking.

How to help : If necessary, encourage social tasks of giving and receiving and catching with the right hand.

Thumbsucking

Many children develop a habit of sucking their thumb or fingers. Initially, it may be used as a nipple substitute or used to aid in burping. Soon it becomes a comforter, and the thumb is sucked when the child wants to be comfortable – eg. going to sleep. This activity is then extended to the times when the child gets anxious or upset.

How to help : Children should never be severely dealt with when they are sucking their thumb. Forcibly removing the thumb from the mouth only increases their anxiety or lost feeling. The cause of the action should be looked into, and the child should be gently weaned from the habit.

Nose picking and nail biting

These are usually tension relieving activities, when the child is nervous or anxious about something. There may be some insecurity about leaving the mother and facing the world alone, eg. entering play school. Since the hand is readily available, the child indulges in some activity with the hand.

How to help : The child has to be given some activity involving the hands, and distracted from the worry. Repeated effort will eventually get rid of the habit.

Bedwetting

It is considered a problem when a child wets the bed regularly beyond the age of five years. Most children, by five years, are dry at night, except during illness or stress. There may be medical reasons, and one of the commonest causes is worm infestation. New or strange places or experiences may make them nervous, and may result in their loss of bladder control.

How to help : Occasional or accidental wetting should be ignored. Parents should try and find out if there is any stress. The child should be asked to pass urine just before bed time, and if necessary, woken up once at night, to pass urine.

Whining

Whining is a way of getting attention. If the parent gives in to whining, it becomes difficult to stop the habit.

How to help : Negative comments, punishment by parents and comparing with other children in the family, worsens the situation. Every time the child needs to understand, how to use words to communicate needs in an acceptable manner, and should be praised and rewarded suitably when he/she does it. This reinforces good communication.

viii. TESTER STAGE (2½ - 3 YEARS)

Testing out learning experiences

Picture 1

Imitating adults helps children begin to understand relationships.

- Children learn how to interact and build relationships with others by observing parents and elders' behaviour with each other.
- It is extremely important for parents and other adults to be aware of their own actions and responses to situations, as children look up to them as role models and imitate them.
- Parents should be consistent in their responses and behaviour, as the children are absorbing values from watching them.

Picture 2

Children need parents to be calm and gentle when they are upset.

- Parents should be patient, and understand the child's need, whenever the child is upset and throws a tantrum.
- Parents' positive and calm response to children's good behaviour will provide a sense of confidence and trust in the children.
- The message of love and reassurance can be conveyed with a hug.

Picture 3

Helping children to notice small differences is a step in their learning to read.

- School readiness skills can be developed through various activities.
- Identifying differences in objects, shapes and pictures helps the children to understand the differences in alphabets and numbers, in due course.
- CHILDREN SHOULD NOT BE FORCED TO WRITE AT THIS AGE.
- Playing games will help practise recognition skills required for reading and writing later.

	SENSE OF SELF	PHYSICAL	RELATIONSHIP	UNDERSTANDING	COMMUNICATION
	"My feelings change quickly. Usually, I like to do things by myself, but sometimes I want to act like a baby. I need your comfort and understanding."	*"The more I use my hands and fingers in different ways, the easier the tasks become."*	*"I like to play near other children, but I am not able to share yet."*	*Routines help me understand the pattern of the day. Please tell me what will happen next."*	*"I love to hear the same story many times. Soon I'll be able to tell it to you."*
WHAT	Children's emotions are momentary and fluctuating. They get upset or angry very easily. When there are younger siblings, children may revert to babyish behaviour.	Children can play simple musical instruments, use a bat and ball, kick or throw a ball, pedal and steer a tricycle. They like to try out many routine activities by themselves. They like to be included in simple household chores.	Children are comfortable with parallel play. They are slowly beginning to build relationships with other children of the same age, but are still not able to share their toys or play interactively.	Children understand time concepts like 'before' and ' after'. They will ask questions about why and when to do things. They want to be kept informed.	They love to take part in adult conversation. They learn new words, expressions and emotions through stories and they imitate what they hear. They tend to compare themselves with children of their own age (peer group) and copy other children.
WHY	At this stage, their need for attention and reassurance is high because they are discovering their identity independent of others around them. They are also fighting for attention with a sibling who may be a new arrival, getting all the attention.	Self-help skills build confidence and give a feeling of competence. These activities refine the fine motor skills and give them joy of participation and achievement.	They love role-play games and imitating adult actions to understand relationships. Their inability to share toys stems from the insecurity of losing it.	Routines will help them to feel safe as they can predict what will happen when. It helps them to understand patterns, connections and sequence of events.	Their listening skills develop, which is very important for the development of communication. They are highly imaginative and creative at this stage. They can follow instructions but conflicting and contradicting instructions may confuse, and demotivate them from learning.
HOW	Children need calm, consistent, loving and flexible parents. Children should be distracted when they are upset. They should never be compared to their siblings or other children.	Parents should not restrain the child's activities, except to ensure the safety of the child. They should encourage all self-help activities - eating, building blocks, books, brushing, etc. and only supervise.	Parents should be consistent in their expectations. They should give children opportunities to be with others of the same age, and help them to feel comfortable. Children can be encouraged to share their toys and take turns, wait and listen.	Any time there is a change in the routine, the child should be told why. As far as possible regular routines for children's meals, play, sleep, shared time, etc. helps them remain happy and content.	Conversation with children should relate to what they see, hear and feel at the moment. All their questions should be patiently and honestly answered. They love to perform, but a shy child should not be forced to perform or sing in front of others.

READINESS FOR SCHOOLING

School readiness is the stage when young children are ready to step out into the big world and begin formal learning. Children reach this stage at their own pace and forcing them is not helpful or advisable. They show sustained attention when they are interested or curious about something. Readiness for schooling actually involves adjustments physically, learning to communicate with strangers, learning life skills like making decisions and coping with stress, developing and understanding relationships and going through the stages and activities in preparation for learning to read and write, as well as deal with mathematics.

Living skills – Physical skills include developing regular habits for eating, bowel movement, sleeping, grooming and dressing themselves. They should be able to manipulate buttons and zips and wash and wipe their hands. They should be encouraged to sleep alone.

Eating habits – When children are sent to playschool they are expected to feed themselves at snack time. Hungry children are cranky and unable to play. Parents have to prepare them by training them to feed themselves. At dinner time, the day's food balance, in terms of nutrition can be restored.

Feeding children – Children are playful, and get easily distracted and only eat the minimum to ease their hunger. This can lead to undernourishment. Parents have to ensure that the food goes in – it may take distraction, coaxing or feeding.

Toilet training – Children should be toilet trained before they are sent to school. Occasional accidents of soiling their clothes are normal and should not be reprimanded severely. Some children may hesitate to use an unfamiliar toilet, like in school.

Before the child is sent to school it is good to ensure bowel movement and if they tend to be constipated, they should be encouraged to clear their bowels after breakfast. At this age they will need an adult help to clean them.

Sleep and rest – Growing children need adequate rest and sleep. They should not be kept too excited or over-stimulated.

By rote learning, no doubt children can memorise, recite over and over again but they do not understand the concepts and their application. It is only with activity, manipulation, exploration and experiencing everyday materials that they develop an understanding of how to reach the answer - which is lifelong learning.

READINESS FOR FORMAL LEARNING

PRE – WRITING

Readiness for writing is the child's ability to hold a pencil correctly and manipulate it to make the fine movements needed to write. Some of the pre-writing or readiness activities that help:

- Colouring pictures with large crayons.
- Colouring, tracing or drawing within lines.
- Scribbling from left to right.
- Cutting paper with a pair of special scissors.
- Threading large beads on a needle or string.
- Stacking small, wooden blocks, one on top of the other.
- Fitting constructional toys together.
- Finger tracing in the air, then on sand tray or slate.

Writing follows familiarity with letters of the alphabet, which follows from understanding and talking the language.

CHILDREN SHOULD NOT BE MADE TO WRITE TILL THEY ARE AT LEAST FOUR YEARS OLD, BUT ALLOWED TO SCRIBBLE AND DRAW TILL THEN.

PRE – NUMERACY

Readiness for mathematics is understanding quantity, volume, space, time etc. and development of logical thinking in children, which is derived from their discoveries and experiences of play activity.

- When children lift up objects, they experience lightness or heaviness.
- Block-building introduces size, relationships, number, quantity and a three dimensional view.
- Dancing allows children to explore and understand space through their bodies.
- Collage and construction activities provide experiences in sorting and classifying.
- Clean-up time provides opportunities for comparing, sorting, counting and arranging.
- Distributing plates, cups, crayons or pencils to other children teaches one-to-one correspondence and counting.
- Ordering, sorting, classifying, sequencing, separating and experiencing one-to-one correspondence helps to lay the foundation for mathematical concepts.

PRE – READING

How do we start teaching children to read? Do we begin with sounds, alphabet, words or sentences? Many people believe that reading involves knowing the letters of the alphabet, how to put them together to make words, and how to string words together to read sentences.

- In order to read, children need to be able recognise minute differences in size, shape and sounds. While these skills need some maturity, they can be developed with practice.
- Activities like sorting, matching, classifying and perceiving patterns help children to relate symbols to sounds and meaning.
- Another important factor in learning to read with meaning, is understanding the spoken language, for which they have to hear the spoken language often.
- Children who have heard the language and express themselves fully and clearly are likely to have better readiness then those who have not heard the language or understand it well.
- Children who are familiar with books and to whom stories have been read and told are more curious about reading and trying to understand.

ix. THE YOUNGER THREE YEAR OLD

Starting to get independant

Picture 1

Children need opportunities to learn to do things by themselves.

- Children at this stage need to be encouraged to do things for themselves even if they are slow and need to redo some things many times
- When they do things for themselves, they feel a sense of achievement.
- We should provide activities for self-help skills like buttoning and lacing, etc.
- They try to please others and expect appreciation for their work.
- Parents should appreciate their effort even if the result is not successful.

Picture 2

Children need a parent nearby when they try new things.

- When they do something new, they need to be praised for their effort. As they are trying out new ways of playing, encouragement will motivate them to create and invent.
- Having an adult nearby also ensures that they are safe while they experiment.

Picture 3

Sharing books with children inspires the love of reading.

- They love to listen to stories, especially when they are featured in it.
- They like the stories that are supported with a lot of pictures.
- They like to look at the same books and read the same story over and over again.
- They begin to understand simple values (like good and bad) told in the story.

	SENSE OF SELF	PHYSICAL	RELATIONSHIP	UNDERSTANDING	COMMUNICATION
	"I am scared! I need you to comfort me now."	*"I need to practise climbing and jumping in a safe place."*	*"I like helping with the baby, but I need you to remember my feelings too."*	*"When I play matching games, it helps me prepare for reading."*	*"I learn new words when we share stories together in your language."*
WHAT	New fears of darkness, dogs, etc. may develop. Nightmares are quite common at this age. Their fears are a reality to them. They adore their parents and like it when they are hugged. They begin to show shyness.	Children can climb steps with alternate feet and climb on play equipment. They can walk in a straight line. They can sit cross-legged. They can bend and do exercises.	They love to play with other children and are fascinated by younger children and demonstrate affection. If there is a younger sibling, they may find it difficult to adjust to them. They need an elder's help and support to resolve emotions.	Children are beginning to reason. They enjoy playing matching and sorting games. They begin to understand the concept of colours, shape and size. They can sort and name objects. They love to solve simple puzzles and can tell their age.	Children acquire the skill to use many words appropriately and are able to make simple sentences. They love to sing rhymes and songs. They begin to ask questions and use language to express themselves. They are now ready to learn a second language. They enjoy fantasy games and stories.
WHY	Their sense of independence is increasing and their time with their primary caregivers is decreasing, quite naturally, fears also develop.	The self-help skills, like toilet-training, dressing, etc. improve and this increases their self-confidence. They begin to use one hand more consistently than the other.	Children feel ignored or neglected at this stage when attention is diverted from them to another.	They begin to understand the consequences of their actions. Time spent with them at this age is precious, as learning and confidence-building takes place at a rapid rate.	They love the attention that they get when they communicate with others. They are able to recall instructions and make connections to familiar words.
HOW	Children need to be reassured and responded to, especially when they are scared. They should be hugged and appreciated when they achieve something.	Adults should allow children exercise their self-help skills with minimum interference and at their pace. Left-handed children should not be corrected or forced to use their right hands only.	This is the stage of co-operative play. Encourage and give opportunities for group games and sharing. Children at this stage should be handled with sensitivity and given attention.	Adults should spend time playing with them. Matching and sorting games can be provided in day-to-day household activities using readily available things around the house.	Adults should provide lots of opportunity to talk. Storytelling is a joyful way of communicating with the child.

HEALTH AND HYGIENE

- Children will start getting interested in holding books themselves. The correct distance at which to hold the book, lighting and good reading habits have to be established.
- Teeth should be checked by a dentist. Children should be taught to brush their teeth twice a day, and this should be periodically monitored.
- They should get into the habit of washing their hands after playing, before eating and after an outing. And always after using the toilet.
- Bowel and bladder control should be achieved with attentive toilet-training.

NUTRITION

- Children should be encouraged to try out new tastes and dishes.
- They will begin to eat a few vegetables. Chewing fruits and vegetables should be encourage.
- They can feed themselves and should not be reprimanded for spilling or being messy.
- A spoon is very useful in self-feeding rice, etc.
- Small pieces of *chappathi*, *dosa* and *idli* given in the plate helps the child to feed independently.
- Encourage them to chew vegetables and fruits.
- Junk foods and aerated drinks should be avoided.
- They should be told never to eat food that is fallen on the floor.

SAFETY

- Children may tend to harm each other while playing.
- They should at all times be closely watched.
- They may be overexposed to the sun, get dehydrated or hungry, and may not realise it. Vigil is necessary.
- TV and computer exposure for long periods is not good and has to be closely monitored.
- Overprotection can be detrimental to the child's self-confidence.

SPECIAL ATTENTION

Seek professional help if at the end of this period, the child:

- does not perform self-help activities like eating independently, brushing teeth, attending to toilet needs, washing hands and putting on clothes with minimum guidance
- does not concentrate on any given activity even for 5 minutes at a time
- does not express verbally or use gestures or facial expression
- does not sort and match simple objects, count or use picture books
- does not use picture books, repeat stories or work on simple puzzles
- does not indulge in fantasy play or draw to express oneself
- does not show interest to go outdoors
- does not identify body parts or relate to gender differences
- does not play games by following rules or taking turns
- does not control emotions in structured formal situations

CHILD ABUSE

Child abuse is the physical, psychological emotional or sexual maltreatment of children.
Abuse by parents and others may be perpetrated because of negligence, ignorance, physical exhaustion, anxiety, exasperation, loss of self control, discord in the family, drinking or deliberate intent.

Abuse takes many forms:
Physical: Simplest forms are beating, shaking, pinching, pulling the ear or hair, kicking and sometimes even starving the child.
Psychological or emotional abuse is probably the least understood because there are never any visible marks but it is cruel and destructive. It includes

Verbal: Constantly teasing, derogatory name-calling, belittling, describing the child in negative ways, finding fault, expressing severe disappointment and strong reprimands about the child rather than the action.

Rejection: Physical abandonment, showing preference for other children, discrimination because of gender and colour, ignoring and isolating, extreme punishment and terrorising children.

Neglect: failure to provide basic necessities (not only due to poverty) but also lack of time and interest due to other pre-occupations, little or no supervision, a disordered or chaotic life, consistently making and failing to keep promises and providing little or no opportunity to play and develop skills and competencies.
All of these lead children to have low self-esteem, inability to believe in themselves, inability to trust, feelings of anger hate and fear, withdrawal and difficulty in learning, lack of curiosity, apathy and unhappiness and often violent and aggressive behavior.

Sexual abuse: Even very young children are sometimes sexually abused. It is usually by some member of the family or a family friend who is never exposed, because the child is either ignored or branded a liar, terrorised or enticed by fondling, and gifts. Sometimes even if the parents know, they try to guard the honour of the family by hiding the fact and thus protecting the abuser. Sexual abuse leaves a permanent scar on the child, and manifests as obsessions, sense of guilt, shame, anxiety or hatred of humanity, particularly of the opposite gender.
Children should be taught to say 'NO' if they are uncomfortable with someone's behavior. They should know the difference between safe and unsafe touch and taught to trust and tell someone and never feel guilty.
Exploitation of children through **child labour** and neglect of their basic needs are becoming increasingly common. Children made to do tedious and heavy chores in the family, being sent out to work and earn a wage in hardship jobs, being overworked, starved, physically abused and in constant fear of punishment are all forms of child abuse.
In all cases, older children should have a list of names and numbers to call for advice and help.

x. THE OLDER THREE YEAR OLD

Ready to step out of home

Picture 1

Children enjoy helping parents around the house. They are practising for future responsibilities.

- They like to take on some simple responsibilities and small tasks.
- This makes them feel grown-up and capable of doing what the adults are doing and they feel part of the family.
- This creates a sense of achievement and builds their self-esteem.

Picture 2

Children are beginning to acquire skills they will need for school.

- They get absorbed in and are able to spend longer periods of time on an activity.
- They can cut paper and should be allowed to use safe scissors.
- They can string large beads and build towers.
- They can independently choose and carry out their activities with some adult supervision.

Picture 3

Children need to know that someone will help them understand their world. Be patient.

- They may begin to ask questions about everything. They would like to know the reasons for instructions.
- Patiently answering all questions and explaining instructions will encourage them to listen and express their feelings.
- They use their body to express themselves, so listen to their communication and react appropriately.

	SENSE OF SELF	PHYSICAL	RELATIONSHIP	UNDERSTANDING	COMMUNICATION
	"Make–believe play helps me imagine that I can do many things."	*"Playing outside is a good way to use my energy, and helps me sleep at night."*	*"It's hard to wait for my turn, but I'm learning."*	*"Learning about big and small will help me with my math."*	*"Look Mom, I got everything you asked for. I'm remembering to do more than one thing at a time."*
WHAT	Children love to look and act like their parents or teachers, and imitate their dressing and actions. They have imaginary friends and enjoy playing pretend games. They need a lot of free time to play imaginative and fantasy games.	Children can climb the ladder, swing, slide, jump, run, hop, hit a ball with a bat, throw and catch the ball as well. They need to use their energy by playing outdoors.	Children begin to play co-operative games. They learn to wait for their turn. They begin to clearly understand what is theirs and what belongs to others. They are learning to ask instead of grabbing. They are learning patience and consideration.	Children are learning simple math concepts by grouping and sorting, and keeping things in order. They are beginning to reason and develop creative skills. They love to play with puzzles, water and sand. They can match colours recognise letters and numbers and sequence.	Children are able to memorise and follow instructions. They repeat all that they hear and watch. They are able to describe events in a simple way, but may stutter and stammer if they are threatened. They are able to express anger in words and expressions and may make up their own words and sentences to convey their feelings.
WHY	Children are comfortable with rules and structured activities. It makes them feel secure and have a sense of control.	Playing outdoors relaxes them and they sleep better. If not they will get frustrated and cranky.	Children want to feel appreciated and their good behaviour recognised by parents.	Their attention span increases. The above readiness activities are vital for the later understanding of math.	Guiding children in performing more than one task helps them in later life to take responsibilities.
HOW	Adults should allow them to play imaginary games, but should restrain them from using violence in their actions or anything that can be destructive to themselves and others around them.	Parents should let children play outdoors as often as possible, as they need to expend their energy. Take them to parks and picnics, etc.	Parents should be around while children are playing, but intervene only when necessary. Appreciating their good behaviour is important, it helps them to do better every time.	Parents can provide various household items and day-to-day activities to help them learn these simple, academic readiness learning skills, as mentioned above.	Parents should find time for children and do interesting activities together. Give them simple family activities and small tasks around the home.

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HANDLING BEHAVIOUR

Children do not know how to control their feelings and how to calm themselves down. If adults get angry when children show these feelings, or ignore them, the children become aggressive, and this leads to emotional and behavioural problems.

Why children 'misbehave' – There are many reasons for which children's behaviour deviates from the norm. They may be seeking attention, reacting to some separation anxiety, tension in the family or are just tired or bored. Unreasonable demands from the adults or from denial can result in inappropriate behaviour.

How to help : Physical punishment does not help. Talk to them about their feelings, without affecting their self-esteem. Understand children's behaviour that is right for each age and temperament. Appreciating and rewarding good behaviour will enhance the child's self-esteem and confidence.

What adults can do – They should disapprove of the behaviour, not the child. They should remain calm and gently point out the bad behaviour, and let the child sort it out. If the child is seeking attention, responses by the adult should be altered, but with clear limits that the child understands.

How to prevent misbehaviour – Adults should always be consistent in the rules and limits they set for children. They should anticipate problems and prevent them as far as possible. Spanking, slapping and all kinds of corporal punishment are more harmful to the child than we think. They may stop negative behaviour for the moment, but do not lead to long-lasting learning of positive behaviour.

TEMPER TANTRUMS

It is normal for children to have temper tantrums at some time or the other. This does not mean that the parenting is bad or that the children are monsters. Temper tantrums are their way of letting others know that they are frustrated or angry. By the age of two, usually children want to assert themselves and would like to have their own way. Any contrary suggestion results in a tantrum as it is the only way they can assert themselves, as they believe their demands are reasonable.

How to help: Consistent and gentle handling, with clear limits will help the children calm themselves and feel secure. The parents should never respond by giving in to the demands, since this will form a pattern and a habit to get what they want.

HYPERACTIVITY

Some children tend to be talkative, but unable to learn social skills. They may be bright, intelligent children who are curious and therefore restless. Such children should not be branded as hyperactive. Children are considered hyperactive if they are restless at all times and are not able to engage in any activity consistently. Specific signs of hyperactivity that a teacher /parent/caregiver can observe:

Difficulty in paying attention to activities that interest other children of the same age.

Difficulty in following simple instructions.

Impulsive behaviour - running, touching or jumping without rest. Crying, yelling, hitting and screaming, which seem inappropriate.

How to help: Such children should be handled with consistency, love and positive inputs. Punishing by spanking or shouting will not help.

EMOTIONAL PROBLEMS

FEAR

Children can have many fears i.e. of the dark, of monsters, or of new situations. It is important to accept their fears. They should be reassured and protected.

How to help

- Getting them to talk about it and explaining everything to them.
- Giving them a little more attention and cuddling, and trying to distract them.
- Preparing them for a forthcoming event, eg. first day in school, going to a new place or meeting new people or the mother going away to hospital to have a baby.

JEALOUSY

Some children find it hard to share things with others. Usually they get upset if the parents pay attention to another child. They miss the attention that they have had exclusively.

How to help:

- Parents should prepare children if they are going to have a sibling. Older children should be included in the care of the younger one, so that they enjoy the interaction and bond with the new arrival.
- Adults should treat all children equally - at home, in school or outside.

GRIEF

Death of a close family member, family break-up, the unexpected departure of a parent or caregiver, loss of a pet or of 'precious' things due to fire, a flood or moving to a new area or strange place are all common causes of grief in children.
Being abused, injured, burnt or scarred, long periods of being in hospital or separated from a parent can all distress children.

Children's understanding of loss

Young children don't understand that death is permanent. They feel grief when they lose someone close to them. They don't understand what is real and what is not, and they may believe that their naughty behaviour has caused the person they loved to go away. Losing someone who cares for them is a major stress that takes time and care to overcome. In a way it is like losing a part of themselves. They do not have the words to express feelings and will show them in the way they act.
They maybe worried about who will look after them eg. if they have lost a parent, they may worry about losing the other parent also.

How to help: Adults should talk to the children and reassure them. They should not shout at them or ignore them. children should be encouraged to express their feelings.

xi. THE YOUNGER FOUR YEAR OLD

Exploring and discovering themselves and the world

Picture 1

Children are curious about all body parts and should learn to use their correct names.

- If they see a child of the opposite sex, they would like to know why they are different. Parents should handle the questions with honesty.
- They begin to identify gender differences by appearance.
- It is important to make the child understand that boys and girls are equal in all respects but different physically. This helps them build positive relationships with members of the opposite sex later in their adult life.

Picture 2

Children need our help to find the right words to express their strong feelings.

- They may become aggressive when they don't get their way and may use language which is not suitable to their emotions.
- Parents should provide physical comfort when the child is unhappy or upset about something. Providing the right word to express the feelings helps them to use it when they are angry or frustrated.
- As it is a passing phase and children do test their new vocabulary with a trusted person like a parent, it is important not to react, but guide them to handle the emotion and say the right words.

Picture 3

Routines help children feel safe and secure because they know what to expect.

- They get disturbed if the routines are changed without any explanation.
- They would like to know the reason and the plan because they like things to be predictable.
- They are able to connect current activities to an upcoming event and that gives them a sense of control.
- Routines help parents and teachers to instil discipline in children and it is also a foundation to develop good habits.

	SENSE OF SELF	PHYSICAL	RELATIONSHIP	UNDERSTANDING	COMMUNICATION
	"When I choose between 2 or 3 things, I am learning how to make decisions."	*"Drawing helps me develop the skills I will need to learn how to write."*	*" I am happy my mother helped me invite my friend to play."*	*"I learn and understand best when I do things myself."*	*"Playing with adults helps me learn to talk about my ideas."*
WHAT	Children develop likes and dislikes to food, clothing, play, friends, etc. They like to make simple choices like what to wear, what to eat, what to play, where to go, etc.	Children can draw, colour, cut and do clay modelling. They can use the chalk to scribble, draw on the black board and hold a crayon. They can keep pebbles or seeds on a line. They can copy horizontal and vertical lines.	They play with friends and do not need the mother to be with them all the time. They become more talkative and friendly and like the company of other children. This helps to refine social skills.	Children understand the concept of time related to the routine activities, like bed time, lunch time etc. They can sort, match, group and sequence. They can dress and undress, manipulate zips and buttons and perform many self-help skills like brushing, washing, etc.	Children can recite, sing songs, repeat alphabets, poems and numbers. They begin to use different tenses while talking. They can create their own stories. And tell them. Playing with adults teaches them social adjustment.
WHY	When they make choices, they are beginning to learn the art of decision making.	Children at this stage and age need lots of opportunity to use their fingers in various ways.	They start choosing their friends and want to be like them. They love to play with friends but may not be able to share.	They learn when they actually explore and experience things in a hands-on manner. It makes them independent and gives them self-respect.	Concepts get clearer. They are able to make connections between objects and incidents.
HOW	Adults should allow them to make simple choices. Begin with two choices and then add a few more and support the choice they make. Later they will be able to choose from many.	Adults should provide opportunities for children to use their big and small muscles by all kinds of physical activities and finger movements.	It is important for parents to understand their need to be with friends. Taking them out to a park, inviting other children to play or visiting friends and relatives with children, is necessary.	Adults should provide lots of opportunities to learn from nature. Adults should be patient and be prepared to answer children's questions.	They should be given many opportunities to talk, sing and interact with others.

HEALTH AND HYGIENE

- At this stage, children are suddenly exposed to many more infections from others in their environment. Hygienic practices like washing hands and not putting their fingers in their mouths, should be strictly followed.
- Children tend to bite their nails when they are worried or tense.
- Nails should always be kept short and clean. Worm infestations are very common at this age. Infested children may be drowsy, dull or uncomfortable in class.
- Children should be bathed at least once a day – if not in the morning, an evening bath works well to calm them down.
- They should be able to attend to toilet needs independently. They should be reminded to wash their hands after using the toilet.
- Parents should ensure that children have adequate hours of sleep.

NUTRITION

- Children tend to be distracted while eating, with wanting to play or even read. So they may get undernourished.
- Food fads and preference for junk food may also get established.
- When children are sent to school from the protected environment of the home, they suddenly feel lost. They don't eat properly, are tense and may even complain of feeling sick.
- Sometimes they may be constipated because of the pressure of time.
- Parents have to be alert and notice any change in eating habits or loss of weight. Caregivers should ensure adequate nutrition.

SAFETY

- Children should be given instructions on what to watch out for and what to stay away from.
- They should be cautioned against petting animals outside the home.
- When children leave the protective supervision of the mother, they may not remember to be careful about their movements.
- Children may hurt each other accidentally. Adults should always be watchful.
- Some children may harm other children without intention, or they may be bullies. Children should learn to protect themselves.
- They should never leave the school with anyone else other than the parent or caregiver.
- They should know their address and where their parents can be contacted.

SPECIAL ATTENTION

Seek professional help if, by five years, the child:

- does not play with friends in small or large groups or relate to siblings
- does not express creativity through art, craft or verbally
- does not take part in physical activities, outdoors and indoor
- does not follow routines in school
- does not perform simple household activities along with adult guidance
- does not follow rules when explained
- does not ever exhibit anxiety with new people and places

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

Children should be provided their basic needs of food, clothing, affection and shelter without discrimination. They have a right to individual preferences, different personalities, differences in quality and intensity of emotions and activities, but within prescribed limits. Instead of changing who the child is, it is best that parents adapt their parenting practices to fit the child - encourage, be flexible and use re-direction.
Children have a right to fun, play, relaxation, outings, friends, hobbies and activities.

Early childhood is a foundation for participation in matters that concern children. Respect for infants' and toddlers' preferences and interests, treating young children as thinking beings and including them in social activities and decisions, form the basis for later forms of participation.

Children should be allowed to be independent. Those who have grown up in an atmosphere of respect and self-esteem become natural leaders and decision makers. They are emotionally mature and can handle their lives well.

Children should be involved in family decisions and should feel respected, heard and listened to and get a response from the adults when they say something. At the same time, they should not become self-centered. Good sensible parenting involves setting rules and standards, consistency in instructions and gentle guidance with reasoning.

Children should realise that rights go with responsibilities, and have to respect the constraints and commitments of adults. They have to learn to share, identify with others and be able to develop attachments, with a sense of give and take. Right does not mean that children can do as they please. There are certain rules and practices that have to be followed without argument. This would vary from family to family and culture to culture. However, they must be permitted to express their feelings and opinions, and grow without fear.

Parents, as a first step, should include their children in major family or personal decisions and encourage them to express their opinions.

xii. THE OLDER FOUR YEAR OLD

Establishing a sense of identity

Picture 1

Children need help to find a time and place to play by themselves.

- They like to play by themselves without disturbance for some time. They do not always have to play with others.
- When they are absorbed in something, adults must prevent another child from disturbing them.
- By playing on their own, they are learning to internalise important concepts.

Picture 2

When parents play easy games with their children, it builds confidence and they are helping them learn how to co-operate.

- They can play board games.
- Board games help them to learn various values, rules, and concepts, and encourage them to play in a group.
- Board games can be used very effectively to correct behaviour, encourage good manners, habits, and safety rules (since they involve playing with others, being patient, waiting for their turn, learning to accept failure and following imaginary safety rules).

Picture 3

For safety reasons, children should be taught their names, parents' names, address and phone number.

- They begin to spend more time away from home.
- In strange places, parents should be with them at all times. They can otherwise tend to wander off.
- Children should be taught not to talk to strangers and not to accept eatables, gifts or other objects. They must be told about the risks of abuse or being taken away.
- They must be shown familiar landmarks and signs around the locality and if possible memorise their parents' phone number, address, etc.

	SENSE OF SELF	PHYSICAL	RELATIONSHIP	UNDERSTANDING	COMMUNICATION
	"Please answer my questions in an honest and simple way."	*"I have a lot of energy. I need to play outside every day."*	*"I am noticing when others feel upset, and I want to help them feel better."*	*"There are so many things I can do that help me to learn math."*	*"I love to sing, rhyme, and have fun with words."*
WHAT	Children are very curious and keep asking questions about everything. They want to know about birth and death.	Children enjoy outdoor games and need to use their body in different ways. They can avoid obstacles while running or cycling. They can play with the ball in different ways. They like to join their elder siblings in games, and will feel frustrated and angry if not allowed to play with older children.	Children begin to show and express love. Friends become very important. They show concern and anxiety when parents fall sick. They start developing attachments outside the family with neighbours, teachers, relatives or family friends, and are affected by their moods.	Children can copy shapes. They are able to tell the positions of the hands of the clock and count till 20. They begin to use a pencil to scribble and write letters of the alphabet and numbers. They can recognise the alphabets and number configurations. They can spell their name.	Children enjoy rhymes, especially silly ones with a lot of rhythm. They love to clap, dance, move their body and make actions for the rhymes. They pick up bad language and use it in fun or play at first, and then appropriately, whenever angry or upset.
WHY	Separation anxiety still exists. They are able to express their curiosity and assert themselves. If the child's curiosity is not satisfied in a proper way they get confused.	Children need to run, climb and play energetically, and this helps them eat and sleep well and grow healthy.	Their understanding of relationships is improving and they are able to empathise and make efforts to comfort and pacify others.	Children begin to understand simple fractions through everyday activities and this helps them to understand and apply mathematical concepts.	Children learn through music, action, dance and rhythm. Their self-expression and creativity should be encourage, curbing these will stunt their growth.
HOW	Honest answers will reassure children when they are anxious. Children should be allowed to play with others, but the feelings and needs of older children who may not always be prepared to play with them, should be respected.	Their physical activities should not be restrained, increase their activities as much as possible. Adults need to be vigilant to avoid accidents. They should anticipate and prevent accidents by taking precautions.	Adults need to understand the children's anxieties and reassure them. They should give the children simple explanations when they ask questions about any stressful events at home like death, etc. They should be encouraged to show empathy to animals.	Adults can provide a lot of opportunities for children to learn about quantities and fractions, through various daily activities, like eating, playing, etc. There are many rhymes to help children understand math concepts like counting and numbers.	Adults should give them lots of simple songs and rhymes. Rhymes could also be used to introduce them to different languages. **TV watching for long periods will encourage them to pick up inappropriate language and ideas.**

DIFFERENT COMPETENCIES

Everyone is endowed with different capabilities and competencies and may excel in one area more than in others.

- Some children are good with languages and in writing and using words and love to read and listen to stories
- Others may have logical and mathematical thinking abilities, appreciate things done in a sequential manner and enjoy playing with number concepts.
- Some however who have good control over their bodies are full of energy and naturally need to have freedom to move, walk and play sports.
- Some children have a natural creative ability, have an active imagination and prefer to spend time drawing, painting and colouring.
- Others with musical inclinations prefer to sing songs, tap, hum or enjoy rhythms and role play.
- Still others with naturalist leanings love flowers, plants and animals and some with mechanical aptitudes ask questions constantly on how things work.

Children move towards those activities where their competencies are most expressed. It will be rewarding for parents and teachers if children's potential is developed by identifying their particular strength and nurturing and supporting them. If not, these become dormant and the child's self esteem suffers.

Each one's individuality is unique and everyone cannot excel at every skill. Children show a high level of performance and intelligence in many areas that marks in class cannot measure. Most schools use only language, logical and mathematical abilities for teaching and evaluating a child's performance – thus leaving other vital intelligences and competencies in sports, creative arts, social competence unrecognised.

Forcing children into careers that are more prestigious from the social point of view or financially more lucrative than others, for which the children do not have an aptitude or interest, will result in underperformance and unhappiness.

Whatever one's competencies, it is finally each one's ability to deal with oneself (EQ) and others (SQ) that leads to human excellence.

Emotional Intelligence is more vital than mere IQ (intelligence) – people with these skills are the ones at the top of their professions. Their emotional quotient (EQ) enables them to live life more happily, and productively, and handle crises more effectively than those who achieve only academic excellence. People with these competencies are sensitive to other people's intentions, moods, behaviour and body language. They are tactful in their dealings with other people and are effective adults. These persons are confident and mature, and have a healthy self-esteem. They are self-motivated and show a great deal of discipline, zeal and perseverance.

Spiritual intelligence (SQ) includes compassion, living in harmony with nature and having a sense of relatedness to the world, to make it a better place to live in. This is very important and often overlooked in education.

LEARNING PROBLEMS IN CHILDREN

In some cases children may have a significant difficulty with any one or more of the following in school .

Lack of listening, paying attention, speaking, reading, spelling, writing, mathematical concepts or social skills, all of which show up as poor performance in school. The child may have difficulty with the learning process i.e. ability to receive, understand or process, remember, recall and respond to information correctly. As the difficulty is hidden, the condition may not be understood and the child mistakenly labelled lazy, stupid or clumsy.

These children may have difficulty in paying attention, be frequently or consistently inattentive. They may be restless because they are bored or want some physical activity. Or they may have difficulty with understanding and using language.

In preschool, children would show disinterest in stories, have difficulty following instructions, expressing needs and have a poor vocabulary. They may have difficulty sorting, matching or sequencing objects/pictures, by shape, size and colour. They may have difficulty in identifying, get confused with b, p, d, 9, g, f and t, m, w, or get confused with the sequence of letters in a word. They may be **dyslexic.**

Some children may have difficulty with social interactions and behave awkwardly with people. They may also be clumsy and awkward in their physical movements. They may be aggressive, have angry outbursts and throw tantrums. They may be **autistic.**

No two children are alike; the difficulty manifests itself in various combinations and can range from mild to severe. Children should not be easily labelled as autistic, dyslexic or having other learning disabilities. The reasons could be emotional, illness or even malnutrition. Often bad teaching confuses children and delays learning. In case of any doubt, a special educator should be consulted.

Children's abilities in other areas may lie hidden beneath the more obvious learning difficulty. A nurturing environment with positive reinforcements will help the child's sense of security and build self-esteem. They will require real assurance that they are loved and cared for. Behaviour management focussing on positive discipline, re-inforcing good and appropriate behaviour and never undermining the child will help. If not they will show fear, aggression, angry outbursts and anxiety, leading to a feeling of rejection and undermining of performance and self-confidence.

xiii. THE YOUNGER FIVE YEAR OLD

Learning to conform

Picture 1

Children feel they are an important part of the family, when they are made responsible for a few simple jobs.

- If they are given responsible tasks, they will carry them out.
- They love to be part of family activities and take part in conversations.
- They follow the siblings and elders in household activities and feel good about having contributed to them.
- They revert to babyish behaviour when stressed.

Picture 2

Children learn about nature when they explore their surroundings.

- They are fascinated by nature and love nature walks.
- They love to go out and explore and find things.
- They are very eager, observe, think, experiment, infer and learn.
- They are happier to learn when the parent explores the outdoors along with them.

Picture 3

Children need to be reminded about rules and how to behave in different situations.

- They are ready to follow rules which they must be reminded about consistently and encouragingly.
- Real life experiences help them understand rules and accepted behaviour.
- Field trips to places give plenty of experiences to learn self control, discipline and to adjust to different environments.
- They are ready to follow behaviour patterns, etiquette, manners that are explained and role-modelled by adults.

	SENSE OF SELF	PHYSICAL	RELATIONSHIP	UNDERSTANDING	COMMUNICATION
	"When you say I have done something well, I want to do it again."	*"Building is fun! I am learning to use my muscles in different ways."*	*"Let me try to find a way to solve my problems before you help."*	*"Looking at the calendar together helps me to understand what to expect each day."*	*"I can take and give short messages."*
WHAT	Children can draw pictures of themselves. They can put away their things, help to pack, lay the table, etc. Appreciation of their actions helps them to want to do it again and again.	Children have the ability to use their muscles in different ways. Children can catch a large ball. They can do beading or lacing and build different things. They can draw, colour within the line and choose different colours.	Children are not yet ready to accept their mistakes while playing. They prefer to work things out for themselves. They love to be appreciated and praised by teachers and other adults about their effort.	Children are learning to look at the calender and understand and accept daily schedules. They begin to identify with cultural festivals and religious functions in their homes. They learn what to do next.	Children can memorise many instructions. They can learn a new language with ease and express themselves. They can learn to sing more complicated songs. If asked short and simple questions they can give answers.
WHY	Their self-confidence is developing rapidly at this stage and they are becoming more independent, efficient and self-reliant. Repeating actions help them learn and gain confidence.	As they are very fond of using anything and everything to create, and construct, all household materials can become their play things in an imaginative and constructive way.	They can resolve problems with friends or others and intervention is necessary only when they are frustrated, anxious, or get violent. Loyalty to the teacher gets stronger. The teacher plays a significant role in their thinking.	Children understand cause and effect, as well as time. They can look forward to birthdays, outings, functions and fun-time with parents.	They are beginning to be more responsible. They can follow simple instructions in pre-school and recall things that have happened to them.
HOW	Children should be allowed to work at their own pace with least interference from parents and adults. They should be encouraged to try again and their efforts and appropriate behaviour appreciated.	Parents should help them and join in their imaginative games. Providing sand to build castles and other imaginary things gives them great pleasure.	Parents should provide a lot of opportunities for children to solve their own problems while playing with friends or interacting with others. Telling stories is a way of helping them learn to resolve their problems, and to cope with situations.	The schedules for the day or week should be told to them so they can anticipate the event and prepare themselves. When there is change in the household routine children should be informed in advance - they adjust better.	Children should be made to feel important with small errands and messages that they can convey. Daily activities can be discussed with children so that they also learn to respond and communicate freely.

HEALTH AND HYGIENE

- Booster doses for immunisation should be given.
- Frequent coughs and colds may cause ear problems.
- Children should be specially guarded while swimming.
- As they get more physical, minor injuries become common. These injuries should be properly dealt with and wounds with broken skin should be cleaned and dressed.

NUTRITION

- At this age children can eat almost all the foods that adults eat.
- It is still necessary to give them two glasses of milk a day as they need the calcium and vitamins contained in milk.
- Children can also join the adults at family meals and be a part of it.
- Parents must give them time to complete their meals. Children take longer to eat, therefore adjustments in anticipation of time, have to be made.

SAFETY

- Children can now fully comprehend the dangers of talking to strangers. They should be told not to trust unknown people or go with them when tempted, or accept eatables from unknown people.
- Adults should watch out for signs of abuse and keep the channels of communication open.

SPECIAL ATTENTION

Seek professional help if the child:

- does not perform small physical tasks when instructed
- does not respond to situations following the required propriety
- does not display uniqueness and individuality in the general performance at school
- does not display skills in fantasising or storytelling
- does not display own style of experimenting and analysing
- does not demand rights, when denied
- does not perform simple craft activities
- does not sing and dance

Please note: In school years, if the child shows difficulty in writing, reading and number work, consult the teacher or seek help from a special educator.

MODERATION IN PARENTING

All parents want whats best for their children, but in their anxiety, they do not always get their methods right.

Adults who look after children are either very strict and control their children by telling them what to do, until the children are well into adulthood, or are too indulgent and leave the children unguided and confused, to grow in their own way and wanting their own way, by tolerating all their tantrums and excesses. Sometimes the parents are preoccupied with their own problems or recreation activities like the TV, and tend to neglect the children's needs.

Upto one year of age, babies are totally dependent on adults for their nurture, feeding, dressing , toilet and comfort. At this stage, adults have to focus on children's needs and attend to all their requirements. Cuddling and comforting children never 'spoils' them. Until children are mobile, they should be carried around so that they can get all the sensory inputs as that will aid their development.

When children are able to express themselves, they need proper and loving guidance. While the parents should respond and attend to their needs, they should also set standards and limits within which the children should act. While it is advisable to encourage independence in their actions, babies should not be led to believe that they should always have their way and do as they please. It is important for households to become child-centred so that the holistic development of the child is not neglected. At the same time, they should not be overindulgent and compensate for neglect or lack of time, by providing expensive gifts. Parents need to balance time with children's needs.

Children mature when their parameters are clearly laid out, and they understand the world around them. Until the age of six, children are not mature enough to take responsible decisions in all spheres. They should be guided by parents and other adults carefully and with proper, loving guidance.

Effective parenting involves

- Passing on values like honesty, integrity, consideration, and compassion.
- Setting a good example and being consistent in guidance and behavior are very important.
- Avoiding negative actions like undue punishments, criticism or cruel behavior.
- Inculcating habits, good manners, sensitivity to other people's needs, respect for elders or authority and working with others.

On the whole, every decision and action in parenting has to be balanced and moderate.

xiv. THE OLDER FIVE YEAR OLD

Learning responsibility

Picture 1

Children have a right to say 'No' when they feel uncomfortable. Adults need to respect this.

- They can express what is unpleasant for them.
- They are able to use 'NO' effectively and show their uneasiness in many ways.
- They should not be forced to do what they do not want to.
- Adults must listen carefully and probe when children create an imaginary event or situation and express unease or unhappiness about it.
- If they show unreasonable dislike or fear of some specific people, they must not be forced to go to them, rather, adults must explore the reasons behind the dislike or fear.

Picture 2

Children learn about science when they are given the opportunity to experiment.

- Children like to understand the reason for all actions.
- They like to experiment with objects and learn by doing things.
- Parents can explain many things to them while they are trying out new experiments.

Picture 3

When parents listen, children learn how to tell a story from beginning to end.

- They love to narrate and tell a story.
- They enjoy talking to others if they are listened to with full attention.
- Adults must encourage them with attentiveness, appreciation and approval.
- They love to see pictures of themselves and the family and hear about family stories.

	SENSE OF SELF	PHYSICAL	RELATIONSHIP	UNDERSTANDING	COMMUNICATION
	"When I feel frustrated, your encouragement helps me to try again."	*"Crafts help me develop control of my hands and fingers."*	*"I need to know that you can still look after me, even when you are upset."*	*"I learn to sort, count and make patterns when I help at home."*	*"Sharing jokes and riddles is a fun way to learn language."*
WHAT	Children love it when their work is recognised. They begin to show their emotional disturbance in various ways. They may suddenly develop stomach ache, vomiting and headache. They are becoming very self-centred and everything revolves around them.	Children enjoy doing creative craft work. They can do paper folding work, pasting and sticking. They can hold the pencil like adults and try to write. They can also do somersaults, balance, walk backwards, walk on a beam, balance on one foot, bend and stretch, ride a cycle with speed and have a good sense of direction.	Children begin to sense the feelings of parents and others. They need to be reassured that they are loved no matter what is happening around. They are learning to be away from home for longer periods.	They can relate clock time to routines. They can identify, sort and classify and count objects like coins, vegetables and blocks.	Children enjoy sharing jokes, narrating events and telling stories. They like to do role play and dramatise events. Children enjoy keeping secrets. They enjoy reading story books with pictures and listening to stories. They can read and write words. They are able to take and convey simple messages.
WHY	Children need encouragement and independence to try again whenever they fail. They are sometimes unable to express fears and anxieties.	Their physical abilities are developing dramatically. They are very impulsive, and may try to do many things which are not safe.	Strong relationships begin to form. They are more sensitive to the changing moods of adults and therefore need reassurance.	Children begin to realise the difference between fantasy and reality. They enjoy household tasks, it makes them feel big and important.	Their communication skills are well developed. Children can think and express themselves.
HOW	Adults should be patient and allow several opportunities for children to express themselves, eg., by role play and listening to their talk.	Parents should continue to provided them with a lot of activities, but have to be vigilant, as they can take risky actions.	Children should know that parents are always there to support them. Parents should take time to explain to them why they are angry or upset. Children can understand.	Children should be given little tasks and errands to perform and allowed to help with household tasks.	They should be encouraged to talk and share jokes. Developing a sense of humour will help them in life.

REMEMBER

Parenting is a privilege. Children need close attention and priority in all circumstances

Children's learning is based on experience. To learn to love, they should experience love through being hugged, with caring words and being shown kindness.

Play is the primary activity of children's learning and development. Playing helps physical, social and emotional growth and enhances thinking skills.

Messing up is the way children learn. They should be allowed to develop new skills through trial and error, however messy.

Mealtimes can be used for encouraging children and the family to communicate with each other and interact.

Children learn to handle their feelings wisely and solve their problems when they are allowed to express themselves freely.

Though children develop differently, their needs are the same, they need love affection and encouragement.

Children learn to handle their feelings wisely and solve their problems when they are allowed to express themselves.

Children learn how to treat other people by observing how their parents treat each other.

Children learn responsibility and judgement when they experience the natural rewards and consequences of their own choices.

Children should be exposed to a rich variety of experiences and activities. These experiences will provide background knowledge for all future learning.

Children imitate what adults do. They learn how to treat other people by observing how adults treat others.

Honesty on both sides is essential for a trusting relationship between children and adults.

Children's special needs should be respected. Extra effort should be put in, with the right input and stimulation.

Children respect adults they can trust. Respect for authority begins with respect for one's parents.

All children should be treated with equal love and respect, whatever their differences or special qualities. Every child is a blessing, and needs to know this.

Parenting becomes enjoyable when parents are healthy, rested, happy and at peace.

Dear Parents,

All parents want the best for their children.

All children need to feel wanted and welcomed with love. Children need your understanding, care, active guidance and stimulating play activities to help them reach their potential.

Each time you talk, play, touch, comfort, cuddle and respond to your child's unique needs in a loving manner, you will make a significant difference. Together, you and your child will have many rewarding experiences.

Harmony in the home, seeing the situation from the child's point of view, giving your children your full attention, helping them solve their problems however trivial they may seem, being consistent in instructions and reactions will help your child's holistic development. It will help them reach their potential and these parenting practices will continue to be effective as they grow up.

Time and patience are absolutely necessary when dealing with children. They take time to understand and master skills and express themselves. While it may sometimes exasperate parents who are pressed for time and energy, in the long run, children grow up to be well-balanced.

Remember you are the best role models for all the values and behaviour patterns you wish your children to have.

We do hope that you enjoy this Guide Book as much as we have enjoyed preparing it.

The BMRF – Resource Team

"Creating without claiming, doing without credit, guiding without interfering. This is primal virtue" - Lao Tzu

In response to many requests received from parents, caregivers, teachers, medical and ECCD professionals and NGO workers we have brought out this *Guide Book for the Early Childhood Years* as a companion to the Hincks Dellcrest, Learning through Play Calendars (Birth to 3 yrs.) (3 to 6 yrs.)

We have been inspired by the

- Messages for parenting in the Hincks Dellcrest Learning through Play Calendars.
- Concepts of developmental elements SPRUC – developed by Judith L. Evans and Ellen Itfeld – authors of *Good Beginnings: Parenting in the Early Years.*
- Work of Dr. Bea Ashem and her dedication and enthusiasm and dream to excite parents about how they can help their children meet their potential.

While it is modelled on the Calendars, using the same format for easy reference, we have added many messages on health, nutrition, safety and special needs. We have also endeavoured to enrich it with ideas for joyful and effective parenting. We have referred to the various Hincks-Dellcrest parenting resources as well.

We deeply appreciate the efforts taken by Hema Srinivas whose vast experience in interacting with parents and caregivers, has enabled her to contribute to the content and to Dr. Indu Balagopal for the formatting and giving enriching inputs. Support at every stage of the development of this Guide Book has come from Dr. S. Anandalakshmy, Jaya Krishnaswamy and Maya Gaitonde and the whole BMRF team.

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